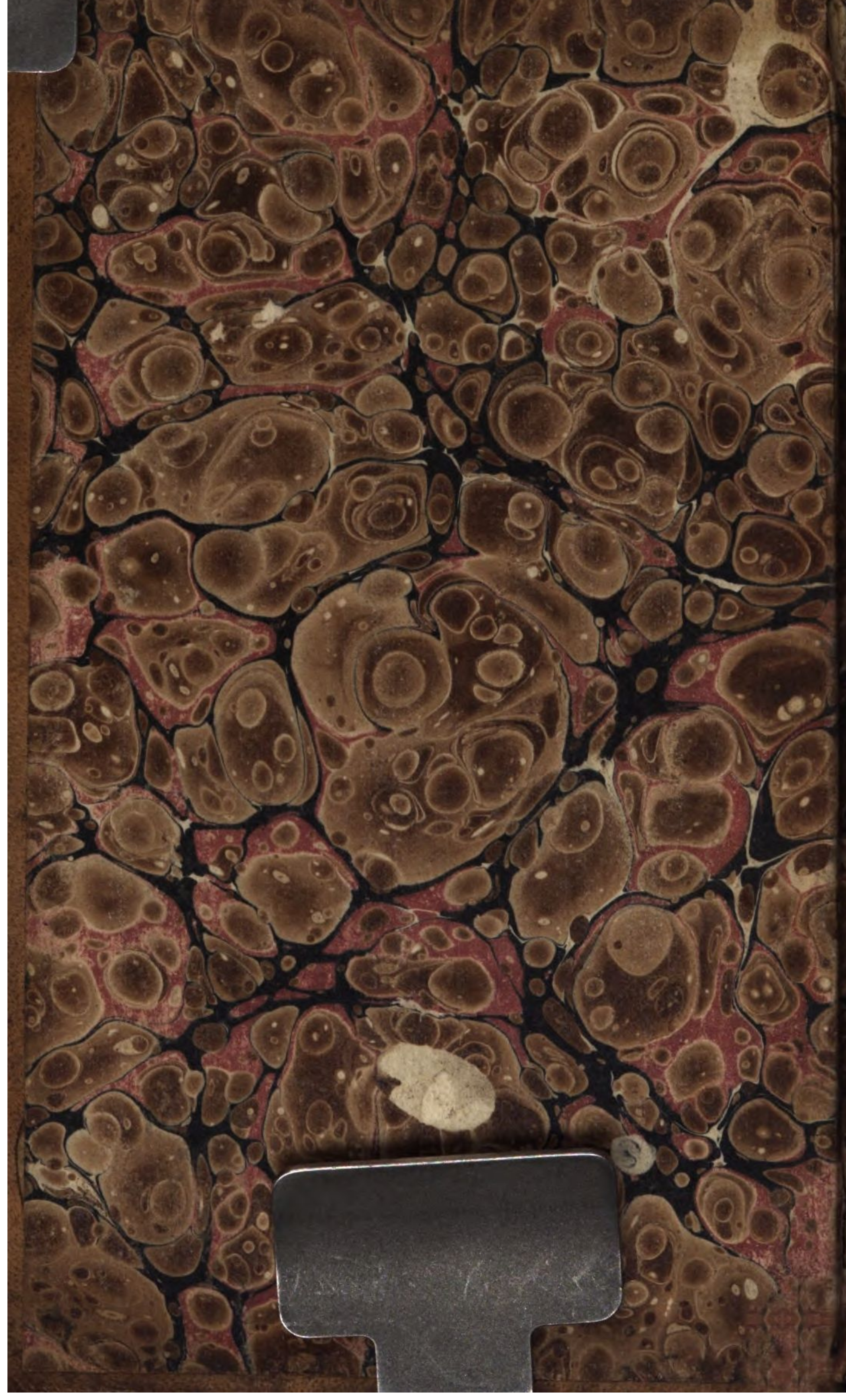
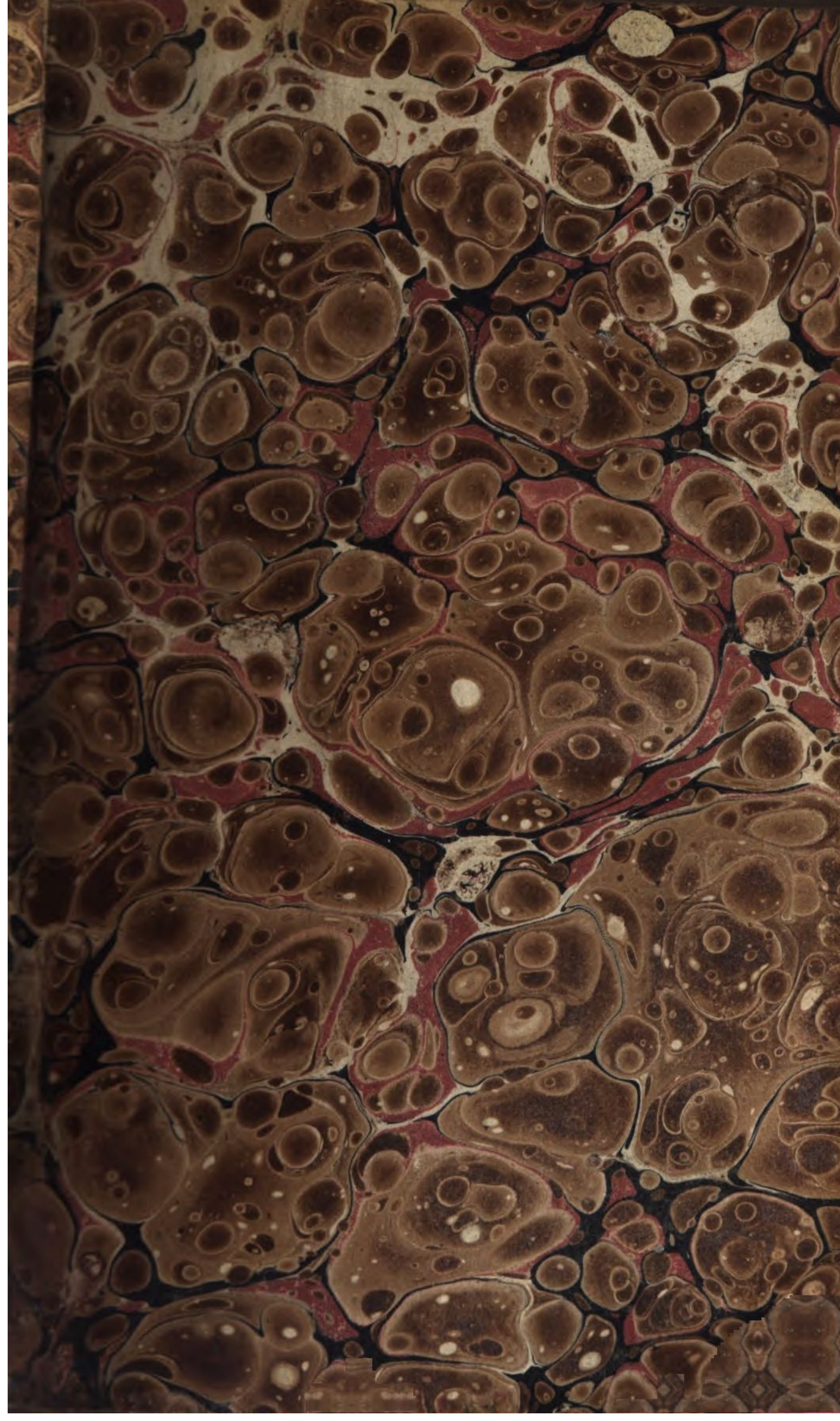






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THE MONUMENT TO BURNS.

On the Banks of Doon, Ayrshire.

THE
WORKS
OF
ROBERT BURNS;
WITH
HIS LIFE,
BY
ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

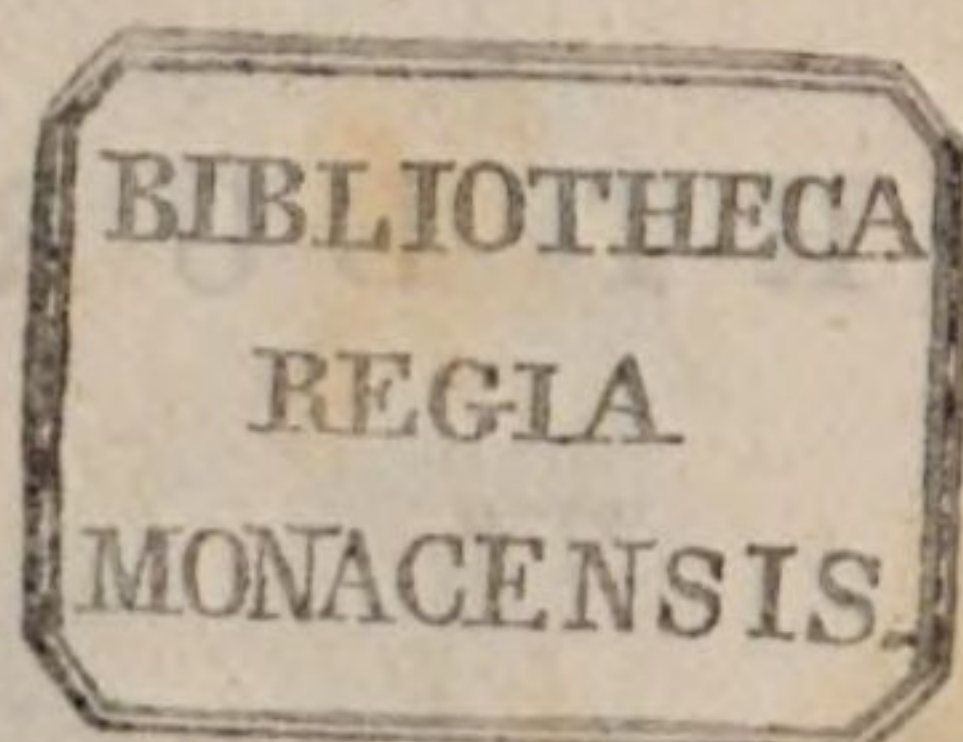
"High Chief of Scottish song!
That could'st alternately impart
Wisdom and rapture in thy page;
And brand each vice with satire strong,
Whose lines are mottoes of the heart,
Whose truths electrify the sage."

Campbell.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

BOSTON:
HILLIARD, GRAY, AND COMPANY.
1834.



CAMBRIDGE :
MANSON AND GRANT, PRINTERS.

ADVERTISEMENT.

WHEN this edition of BURNS was first announced, six volumes, it was calculated, would contain all that was desirable to publish of his writings. But the success of the first volume opened new sources of intelligence—so many new poems, new songs, new letters, and new anecdotes were supplied, that the Editor began to feel the necessity of extending the limits of his undertaking. Nor was this all: the propriety of forming a more ample Glossary was pressed upon him by his friends in whose judgment he has confidence; while, at the same time, he was stimulated to exertion by other publishers, who menaced him with rival editions of the Poet, conducted by editors of great powers and original resources. To render his own edition of his favorite bard acceptable to his country is his most anxious wish; and he hopes, though living at a distance from “The land of BURNS,” and much employed in other pursuits, he will be found to have done his duty, and also to have rendered the triumph of his opponents at least a matter of doubt.

To enable the Editor to do justice to the genius of BURNS, he must give him at full length, and extend the work to EIGHT [FOUR] VOLUMES. The present volume, together with the succeeding one, will

contain his Letters, while the eighth will be occupied with his Remarks on Scottish song, his Memoranda, and Border and Highland Tours ; including a Glossary and a General Index. New title-pages will be given for the whole work, and no pains will be spared, on the part of the Editor and Publishers, to render the publication at once complete and satisfactory. A month or two must, however, elapse before the appearance of the concluding volumes ; but of this public notice will be given.

The Editor is under little alarm lest this change should be unacceptable to his countrymen : to extend their acquaintance with so rare a genius as BURNS, and open up fresh sources of enjoyment and happiness, cannot but be agreeable to all : he feels like one who confers a benefit under the appearance of requesting a favor.

Belgrave Place,
June 15, 1834.

NOTICE

TO THE FIFTH VOLUME OF THE LONDON EDITION.

With this volume closes the poetry of Burns. Along with his Letters, which are numerous and interesting, will be printed his observations on Scottish Song, enlivened by occasional snatches of original and amended verse. In arranging the lyrics and letters addressed to Thomson, the Editor has introduced various songs in the order of their composition, which were written for other purposes or publications. He has also supplied some information respecting the heroines of the Poet's latter strains; and ventured, too, to insert, now and then, an anecdote or a remark on lyric composition. Nor is it without satisfaction that he sees he has kept his word with the public in an important point.—In the announcement of the work, one hundred and odd pieces of verse more than Currie's octavos contained, were promised; he has been enabled to give nearly one hundred and fifty. Some of these, too, are long poems; and, among the songs, will be found many exhibiting Burns in his happiest humor and finest pathos.

NOTICE

TO THE SIXTH VOLUME OF THE LONDON EDITION.

This Volume carries the correspondence of Burns to the close of the year 1788.—His letters are now arranged in the order of their composition: a number hitherto confined to manuscript have been added: passages omitted from personal reasons by former Editors will in many instances, be found restored: brevity, as well as information, has been studied in the notes, which are chiefly of a biographical nature; and the whole forms an interesting, as well as an authentic record, of the feelings and fortunes of the Poet.

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SONGS

AND

CORRESPONDENCE.

WE come now to the correspondence between Burns and Thomson on the subject of northern music and song. In the autumn of 1792 the latter planned his truly elegant and adventurous work, entitled: "A select Collection of original Scottish Airs; to which are added Symphonies and Accompaniments by Pleyel and Kozeluck, with characteristic Verses by the most esteemed Scottish Poets;" and as Burns was the only poet of that period worthy of the name, he was instantly applied to. He had, as has been amply shown in the last volume, contributed largely to the "Musical Museum" of Johnson, and was still composing for it: the work of Thomson presented something more worthy of his ambition, and he promised his aid with an enthusiasm and alacrity peculiar to himself. The songs were all to be published with the names of the authors; and as the new lyrics were sure to be compared with those which they superseded, there was a twofold claim upon the Poet for his purest and happiest musings.

"The undertaking of Thomson," says Currie, "is one on which the public may be congratulated in various points of view; not merely as having collected the finest of the Scottish songs and airs of past times,

but as having given occasion to a number of original songs of our Bard, which equal or surpass the former efforts of the pastoral muses of Scotland ; and which, if we mistake not, may be safely compared with the lyric poetry of any age or country. The letters of Burns to Thomson include the songs he presented to him, some of which appear in different stages of their progress ; and these letters will be found to exhibit occasionally his notions of song writing, and his opinions on various subjects of taste and criticism. These opinions, it will be observed, were called forth by the observations of his correspondent ; and without the letters of the latter, those of Burns would have been often unintelligible."

The reasons which influenced Currie in printing the letters of Thomson along with those of the Poet are equally strong now. The opinions of Burns, though generally given spontaneously, were now and then forced from him by the criticisms of his friend. It may be remarked, generally, that the former always thought and felt as a poet—the latter as a musician ; one was chiefly solicitous about the weight of the sense—the other about the beauty of the sound. The changes which "Wandering Willie" and the "Address of Bruce to his troops" underwent will bear out this remark, and perhaps induce some to wonder how one so fiery and intractable in most matters should have become so soft and mild to fiddlers and bagpipers. The poetry which is written for music must, it is true, be measured in another way than that which is for perusal only. The emphatic notes of the music must find an echo in the emphatic words of the verse ; and words soft and liquid are far fitter for ladies' lips than words rough and hissing. It is nevertheless certain that language at once emphatic

and harmonious is not easily summoned into lyric verse ; and it is quite as true that, in substituting a melodious for a harsher word, the sentiment is often crushed out by the experiment. A certain happiness of language as well as of thought is demanded by the lyric muse, and no one had this in greater perfection than Burns—a truth which the reader will easily discover for himself in the course of the ensuing correspondence.

No. 1.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, September, 1792.

SIR,

FOR some years past I have, with a friend or two, employed many leisure hours in selecting and collating the most favorite of our national melodies for publication. We have engaged Pleyel, the most agreeable composer living, to put accompaniments to these, and also to compose an instrumental prelude and conclusion to each air, the better to fit them for concerts, both public and private. To render this work perfect, we are desirous to have the poetry improved, wherever it seems unworthy of the music ; and that it is so in many instances, is allowed by every one conversant with our musical collections. The editors of these seem in general to have depended on the music proving an excuse for the verses ; and hence, some charming melodies are united to mere nonsense and doggrel, while others are accommodated with rhymes so loose and indelicate, as cannot be sung in decent company. To remove this reproach would be an easy task to the author of the "Cotter's Saturday Night ;" and, for the honor of Caledonia, I would fain hope he may be induced to take up the pen. If so, we shall be enabled to present the public with a collection, infinitely more interesting than any that has yet appeared, and acceptable to all persons of taste, whether they wish for correct melodies, delicate accompaniments, or characteristic verses.—We will esteem your poetical assistance a particular favor, besides paying any reasonable price you shall please to demand for it. Profit is quite a secondary consideration with us, and we are resolved to spare neither pains nor expense on the publication. Tell me

frankly, then, whether you will devote your leisure to writing twenty or twenty-five songs, suited to the particular melodies which I am prepared to send you. A few songs, exceptionable only in some of their verses, I will likewise submit to your consideration; leaving it to you, either to mend these, or make new songs in their stead. It is superfluous to assure you that I have no intention to displace any of the sterling old songs; those only will be removed which appear quite silly or absolutely indecent. Even these shall be all examined by Mr. Burns, if he is of opinion that any of them are deserving of the music, in such cases no divorce shall take place.

G. THOMSON.

No. II.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

Dumfries, 16th September, 1792.

SIR,

I HAVE just this moment got your letter. As the request you make to me will positively add to my enjoyments in complying with it, I shall enter into your undertaking with all the small portion of abilities I have, strained to their utmost exertion by the impulse of enthusiasm. Only, don't hurry me: "Deil tak the hindmost" is by no means the *cri de guerre* of my muse. Will you, as I am inferior to none of you in enthusiastic attachment to the poetry and music of old Caledonia, and, since you request it, have cheerfully promised my mite of assistance—will you let me have a list of your airs with the first line of the printed verses you intend for them, that I may have an opportunity of suggesting any alteration that may occur to me? You know 'tis in the way of my trade; still leaving you, gentlemen, the undoubted right of

publishers, to approve or reject, at your pleasure, for your own publication. Apropos, if you are for English verses, there is, on my part, an end of the matter. Whether in the simplicity of the ballad, or the pathos of the song, I can only hope to please myself in being allowed at least a sprinkling of our native tongue. English verses, particularly the works of Scotsmen, that have merit, are certainly very eligible. "Tweedside!"—"Ah! the poor shepherd's mournful fate!"—"Ah! Chloris, could I now but sit," &c. you cannot mend: but such insipid stuff as "To Fanny fair could I impart," &c. usually set to "The Mill, Mill, O!" is a disgrace to the collections in which it has already appeared, and would doubly disgrace a collection that will have the very superior merit of yours. But more of this in the farther prosecution of the business, if I am called on for my strictures and amendments—I say amendments; for I will not alter except where I myself, at least, think that I amend.

As to any remuneration, you may think my songs either above or below price; for they shall absolutely be the one or the other. In the honest enthusiasm with which I embark in your undertaking, to talk of money, wages, fee, hire, &c. would be downright prostitution of soul! A proof of each of the songs that I compose or amend, I shall receive as a favor. In the rustic phrase of the season, "Gude speed the wark!"

I am, Sir,

Your very humble servant,

R. BURNS.

[At the time of the commencement of this correspondence, Scottish songs were but little regarded. Ramsay's Miscellany was deformed by innumerable vulgarities: Herd's collection, though curious, was chiefly interesting to the antiquary; and

Johnson's Museum, great as its merits were, both in verse and music, had not become popular. Thomson perceived this, and set about supplying the deficiency with considerable taste and skill. His chief ally was Burns,—for who can praise his discernment in desiring Wolcot to write words for northern airs? In music Pleyel ranks high, but no one can help feeling that his symphonies and accompaniments now and then encumber the music they were intended to adorn. The extreme simplicity of our northern airs is hurt by these embellishments, as a Doric temple would be injured by a Corinthian portico, or the Venus de Medici with bracelets of gold and diamonds on her arms, and drops at her ears.—ED.]

No. III.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, 13th Oct. 1792.

DEAR SIR,

I RECEIVED with much satisfaction your pleasant and obliging letter, and I return my warmest acknowledgments for the enthusiasm with which you have entered into our undertaking. We have now no doubt of being able to produce a collection highly deserving of public attention in all respects.

I agree with you in thinking English verses, that have merit, very eligible, wherever new verses are necessary; because the English becomes every year, more and more, the language of Scotland; but if you mean that no English verses, except those by Scottish authors, ought to be admitted, I am half inclined to differ from you. I should consider it unpardonable to sacrifice one good song in the Scottish dialect, to make room for English verses; but, if we can select a few excellent ones suited to the unprovided or ill-provided airs, would it not be the very bigotry of literary patriotism to reject such, merely because the authors were born south of the Tweed? Our sweet air, "My Nannie, O," which in the collections is joined to the poorest

stuff that Allan Ramsay ever wrote, beginning, "While some for pleasure pawn their health," answers so finely to Dr. Percy's beautiful song, "O Nancy wilt thou go with me," that one would think he wrote it on purpose for the air. However, it is not at all our wish to confine you to English verses: you shall freely be allowed a sprinkling of your native tongue, as you elegantly express it; and, moreover, we will patiently wait your own time. One thing only I beg, which is, that however gay and sportive the muse may be, she may always be decent. Let her not write what beauty would blush to speak, nor wound that charming delicacy which forms the most precious dowry of our daughters. I do not conceive the song to be the most proper vehicle for witty and brilliant conceits: simplicity, I believe, should be its prominent feature; but, in some of our songs, the writers have confounded simplicity with coarseness and vulgarity; although between the one and the other, as Dr. Beattie well observes, there is as great a difference as between a plain suit of clothes and a bundle of rags. The humorous ballad, or pathetic complaint, is best suited to our artless melodies; and more interesting, indeed, in all songs than the most pointed wit, dazzling descriptions, and flowery fancies.

With these trite observations, I send you eleven of the songs, for which it is my wish to substitute others of your writing. I shall soon transmit the rest, and, at the same time, a prospectus of the whole collection; and you may believe we will receive any hints that you are so kind as to give for improving the work, with the greatest pleasure and thankfulness.—I remain, dear Sir, &c.

No IV.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

MY DEAR SIR,

LET me tell you, that you are too fastidious in your ideas of songs and ballads. I own that your criticisms are just; the songs you specify in your list have, all but one, the faults you remark in them; but who shall mend the matter? Who shall rise up and say—Go to, I will make a better? For instance, on reading over the “The Lea-rig,” I immediately set about trying my hand on it, and, after all, I could make nothing more of it than the following, which, Heaven knows, is poor enough:—

MY AIN KIND DEARIE O.

I.

When o’er the hills the eastern star,
Tells bughtin-time is near, my jo;
And owsen frae the furrow’d field,
Return sae dowf and weary, O;
Down by the burn, where scented birks*
Wi’ dew are hanging clear, my jo;
I’ll meet thee on the lea-rig,
My ain kind dearie O!

II.

In mirkest glen, at midnight hour,
I’d rove, and ne’er be eerie, O;
If thro’ that glen I gaed to thee,
My ain kind dearie O!
Altho’ the night were ne’er sae wild,
And I were ne’er sae wearie, O,
I’d meet thee on the lea-rig,
My ain kind dearie O!

* For “scented birks,” in some copies, “birken buds.”

Your observation as to the aptitude of Dr. Percy's ballad to the air, "Nannie, O," is just. It is besides, perhaps, the most beautiful ballad in the English language. But let me remark to you, that in the sentiment and style of our Scottish airs, there is a pastoral simplicity, a something that one may call the Doric style and dialect of vocal music, to which a dash of our native tongue and manners is particularly, nay peculiarly, apposite. For this reason, and, upon my honor, for this reason alone, I am of opinion (but, as I told you before, my opinion is yours, freely yours, to approve or reject, as you please) that my ballad of "Nannie, O!" might perhaps do for one set of verses to the tune. Now don't let it enter into your head, that you are under any necessity of taking my verses. I have long ago made up my mind as to my own reputation in the business of authorship; and have nothing to be pleased or offended at, in your adoption or rejection, of my verses. Though you should reject one half of what I give you, I shall be pleased with your adopting the other half, and shall continue to serve you with the same assiduity.

In the printed copy of my "Nannie, O," the name of the river is horridly prosaic. I will alter it:

"Behind yon hills where Lugar flows."

Girvan is the name of the river that suits the idea of the stanza best, but Lugar is the most agreeable modulation of syllables.

I will soon give you a great many more remarks on this business; but I have just now an opportunity of conveying you this scrawl, free of postage, an expense that it is ill able to pay: so, with my best compliments to honest Allan, Gude be wi' ye, &c.

Friday Night.

[“In the copy transmitted to Mr. Thomson, instead of *wild*, was inserted *wet*. But in one of the manuscripts, probably

written afterwards, wet was changed into wild—evidently a great improvement. The lovers might meet on the lea-rig, “although the night were ne’er so *wild*,” that is, although the summer-wind blew, the sky lowered, and the thunder murmured: such circumstances might render their meeting still more interesting. But if the night were actually wet, why should they meet on the lea-rig? On a wet night, the imagination cannot contemplate their situation there with any complacency—Tibullus, and after him Hammond, has conceived a happier situation for lovers on a wet night. Probably Burns had in his mind the verse of an old Scottish song, in which *wet* and *weary* are naturally enough conjoined:—

‘When my ploughman comes hame at ev’n,
He’s often wet and weary;
Cast off the wet, put on the dry,
And gae to bed my deary.’ ”—CURRIE.]

Saturday Morning.

As I find I have still an hour to spare this morning before my conveyance goes away, I will give you “Nannie, O!” at length.

Your remarks on “Ewe-bughts, Marion,” are just; still it has obtained a place among our more classical Scottish songs; and what with many beauties in its composition, and more prejudices in its favor, you will not find it easy to supplant it.

In my very early years, when I was thinking of going to the West Indies, I took the following farewell of a dear girl. It is quite trifling, and has nothing of the merits of “Ewe-bughts;” but it will fill up this page. You must know that all my earlier love-songs were the breathings of ardent passion, and though it might have been easy in after-times to have given them a polish, yet that polish, to me, whose they were, and who perhaps alone cared for them, would have defaced the legend of my heart, which was so faithfully inscribed on them. Their uncouth simplicity was, as they say of wines, their race.

TO MARY CAMPBELL.

I.

Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,
And leave auld Scotia's shore?
Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,
Across th' Atlantic's roar?

II.

O sweet grows the lime and the orange,
And the apple on the pine;
But a' the charms o' the Indies
Can never equal thine.

III.

I hae sworn by the Heavens to my Mary,
I hae sworn by the Heavens to be true;
And sae may the Heavens forget me
When I forget my vow!

IV.

O plight me your faith, my Mary,
And plight me your lily white hand;
O plight me your faith, my Mary,
Before I leave Scotia's strand.

V.

We hae plighted our troth, my Mary,
In mutual affection to join;
And curst be the cause that shall part us!
The hour and the moment o' time!

"Galla Water," and "Auld Rob Morris," I think, will most probably be the next subject of my musings. However, even on my verses, speak out your criticisms with equal frankness. My wish is, not to stand aloof, the uncomplying bigot of *opiniâtreté*, but cordially to join issue with you in the furtherance of the work.

No. V.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

November 8th. 1792.

IF you mean, my dear Sir, that all the songs in your collection shall be poetry of the first merit, I am afraid you will find more difficulty in the undertaking than you are aware of. There is a peculiar rhythmus in many of our airs, and a necessity of adapting syllables to the emphasis, or what I would call the feature-notes of the tune, that cramp the poet, and lay him under almost insuperable difficulties. For instance, in the air, "My wife's a wanton wee thing," if a few lines smooth and pretty can be adapted to it, it is all you can expect. The following were made extempore to it; and though, on farther study, I might give you something more profound, yet it might not suit the light-horse gallop of the air so well as this random clink:—

THE WINSOME WEE THING.

I.

She is a winsome wee thing,
She is a handsome wee thing,
She is a bonnie wee thing,
This sweet wee wife o' mine.

II.

I never saw a fairer,
I never lo'ed a dearer;
And niest my heart I'll wear her,
For fear my jewel tine.

III.

She is a winsome wee thing,
She is a handsome wee thing,
She is a bonnie wee thing,
This sweet wee wife o' mine.

IV.

The world's wrack we share o't,
The warstle and the care o't;
Wi' her I'll blythely bear it,
And think my lot divine.

I have just been looking over the "Collier's bonnie Dochter;" and if the following rhapsody, which I composed the other day, on a charming Ayrshire girl, Miss Lesley Baillie (afterwards Mrs. Cuming, of Logie), as she passed through this place to England, will suit your taste better than the "Collier Lassie,"—fall on and welcome:—

BONNIE LESLEY.

I.

O saw ye bonnie Lesley
As she gaed o'er the border?
She's gane, like Alexander,
To spread her conquests farther.

II.

To see her is to love her,
And love but her for ever;
For Nature made her what she is,
And never made anither!

III.

Thou art a queen, fair Lesley,
Thy subjects we, before thee:
Thou art divine, fair Lesley,
The hearts o' men adore thee.

IV.

The Deil he could na scaith thee,
Or aught that wad belang thee;
He'd look into thy bonnie face,
And say, "I canna wrang thee."

V.

The powers aboon will tent thee ;
 Misfortune sha' na steer thee :
 Thou'rt like themselves so lovely,
 That ill they'll ne'er let near thee.

VI.

Return again, fair Lesley,
 Return to Caledonie !
 That we may brag, we hae a lass
 There's nane again sae bonnie.

I have hitherto deferred the sublimer, more pathetic airs, until more leisure, as they will take, and deserve, a greater effort. However, they are all put into your hands, as clay into the hands of the potter, to make one vessel to honor, and another to dishonor.—Farewell, &c.

[The Poet in a letter to Mrs. Dunlop, dated August, 1792, describes the influence which the beauty of Miss Lesley Baillie exercised over his imagination.—“ Know then,” said he, “ that the heart-struck awe, the distant humble approach, the delight we should have in gazing upon and listening to a messenger of Heaven, appearing in all the unspotted purity of his celestial home among the coarse polluted far inferior sons of men, to deliver to them tidings that make their hearts swim in joy, and their imaginations soar in transport—such, so delighting and so pure, were the emotions of my soul on meeting the other day with Miss Lesley Baillie, your neighbour. Mr. Baillie, with his two daughters, accompanied by Mr. H. of G., passing through Dumfries a few days ago on their way to England, did me the honor of calling on me : on which I took my horse (though God knows I could ill spare the time,) and accompanied them fourteen or fifteen miles, and dined and spent the day with them. ’Twas about nine, I think, when I left them ; and riding home, I composed the following ballad.”

It is to be hoped that Mr. Findlater will read this note, and feel that when he charged the editor with misrepresentation, he was, in fact, accusing Burns. If the Poet had no horse while he lived in Dumfries, as the supervisor avers, how came he to

mount one and ride to Annan with Miss Lesley Baillie? His words are plain and to the point; and the editor must continue to believe that Burns mounted his horse, though it has pleased Mr. Findlater to say otherwise.—ED.]

No. VI.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

HIGHLAND MARY.

Tune—"Katharine Ogie."

I.

YE banks, and braes, and streams around
The castle o' Montgomery,
Green be your woods, and fair your flowers,
Your waters never drumlie!
There simmer first unfauld her robes,
And there the langest tarry;
For there I took the last fareweel
O' my sweet Highland Mary.

II.

How sweetly bloom'd the gay green birk,
How rich the hawthorn's blossom,
As underneath their fragrant shade
I clasp'd her to my bosom!
The golden hours on angel wings,
Flew o'er me and my dearie;
For dear to me, as light and life,
Was my sweet Highland Mary!

III.

Wi' mony a vow, and lock'd embrace,
Our parting was fu' tender;
And, pledging aft to meet again,
We tore oursels asunder;

But oh! fell death's untimely frost,
 That nipt my flower sae early!—
 Now green's the sod, and cauld's the clay,
 That wraps my Highland Mary!

IV.

O pale, pale now, the rosy lips
 I aft hae kissed sae fondly!
 And clos'd for ay the sparkling glance,
 That dwelt on me sae kindly!
 And mouldering now in silent dust,
 That heart that lo'd me dearly—
 But still within my bosom's core
 Shall live my Highland Mary!

14th November, 1792.

MY DEAR SIR,

I agree with you that the song, "Katharine Ogie," is very poor stuff, and unworthy, altogether unworthy, of so beautiful an air. I tried to mend it; but the awkward sound, Ogie, recurring so often in the rhyme, spoils every attempt at introducing sentiment into the piece. The foregoing song pleases myself; I think it is in my happiest manner: you will see at first glance that it suits the air. The subject of the song is one of the most interesting passages of my youthful days; and I own that I should be much flattered to see the verses set to an air which would ensure celebrity. Perhaps, after all, 'tis the still glowing prejudice of my heart that throws a borrowed lustre over the merits of the composition.

I have partly taken your idea of "Auld Rob Morris." I have adopted the two first verses, and am going on with the song on a new plan, which promises pretty well. I take up one or another, just as the bee of the moment buzzes in my bonnet-lug; and do you, *sans ceremonie*, make what use you choose of the productions.—Adieu, &c.

[In the notes to "My Highland Lassie, O," and "To Mary in Heaven," as well as in the Life of Burns, not a little has been said of Mary Campbell, of whose loveliness and too early death the Poet sung with so much beauty and pathos. More, and much that is interesting, can be added: my friend, John Kerr, Esq., writer in Glasgow, has communicated the following particulars:—

"The parents of Highland Mary lived in Greenock, and she crossed the firth of Clyde to visit some relations in Cowal, previous to her marriage. Her father was a mariner; had two sons, Archibald and Robert; and, besides Mary, a daughter, named Anne, who married James Anderson, a stonemason. All these individuals are now dead: Mary was not long outlived by her father and brothers: her mother died in great poverty in the year 1828. The representatives of Highland Mary, therefore, now consist of Anderson's children—two sons and two daughters. Mary, it appears, was not hurried to the grave immediately after her return from Cowal: she lived several weeks with her father, and every week received a letter from her lover. The circumstance of a girl in her humble condition receiving a letter weekly excited the curiosity of the neighbours: the secret was carefully hunted out, and one of the gossips informed her father and mother that Mary was in the habit of receiving letters from a person named Burns, who was known to be a strange character, and 'a great scoffer at women.' Mary was questioned on the subject, and admitted the correspondence, laughing heartily at the description of her lover, whose scoffing, she said, she was ready to trust to. After this, Mary was allowed to receive her letters openly: one of them, it appears, contained the song of 'The Highland Lassie, O;' for her mother got it by heart from the Poet's correspondence, and, in her declining years, soothed her grand-children with strains which recorded the charms of her favorite daughter.

"It is to be regretted that none of these letters are now in existence. After Mary's death, her father disliked all allusions to her or to her lover; and when Burns wrote a moving letter, requesting some memorial of her he loved so dearly, the stern old man neither answered it, nor allowed any one to speak about it in his presence. His grand-children can sing some scraps of the songs which he wrote in praise of their aunt; and these, save the Bible presented to her by the Poet, are all that the relatives of Highland Mary have to bear testimony of the love that was between her and Burns.

"Before the 'last farewell,' commemorated in the song of

‘Highland Mary,’ was taken, the lovers plighted mutual faith, and, exchanging Bibles, stood with a running stream between, and, lifting up its waters in their hands, vowed love while the woods of Montgomery grew and its waters ran. The spot where this took place is still pointed out. Mary’s Bible was of the commonest kind, and consisted of one volume only—that of Burns was elegantly bound, and consisting of two volumes. In the first volume he had written,—‘And ye shall not swear by my name falsely—I am the Lord. Levit. chap. xix., v. 12.’—In the second—‘Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oath. St. Matth. chap. v., v. 33;’ and on a blank leaf of both volumes, ‘Robert Burns, Mossgiel.’ By the death of Mary, this Bible came into the possession of her mother, who, about twelve years ago, gave it to her only surviving daughter, Mrs. Anderson. The circumstance of its being in two volumes seemed, at one period, to threaten its dismemberment; for, upwards of five years since, Mrs. Anderson presented a volume to each of her two daughters; but on the approaching marriage of these two females sometime afterwards, her eldest son, William Anderson, a mason in Renton, prevailed upon each of his sisters to dispose of the volumes they had received to him; and thus both volumes, once more united, now remain in the custody of the senior nephew of Highland Mary. The sacred verses we have quoted above remain in the bold, distinct handwriting of the Poet; but his signature, on the opposite leaves, is almost wholly obliterated. In the first volume, a masonic emblem, drawn by Burns, below his signature, is in complete preservation. Mr. William Anderson is also possessed of a pretty large lock of his aunt, Highland Mary’s hair, a portion of which he presented to us, as a relic of the Bard’s first love.

“We now come to another era in the history of this Bible. Mr. Archibald, schoolmaster in Largs, an admirer of Burns, and a votary of the Scottish muse, waited, it is said, on old Widow Campbell, some time before her death, for the purpose of purchasing the volumes. He learnt, however, that she was a pauper on the roll of the Kirk Session of Greenock, who, in consequence, were entitled to take possession of her little property as soon as death removed her from this world; but in the mean time, to secure a right to them, he is said to have bargained with her that he should become the possessor of the volumes when that event took place, at such a price as might be agreed upon between him and the Session. In February last, Mr. Archibald having heard that the Bible had found its way into the custody of one of the elders, presented a memorial to the Session:—

“ ‘Your Memorialist will not presume to dictate to your Reverend Body what you may or ought to do with the Bible. He takes leave, however, to say, that if you do not see fit to retain them as public property, estimable to the people of Greenock, in consequence of the historical circumstances connected with these volumes, having been within their locality, he, the Memorialist, will be proud to be one of those who will gladly come forward to offer you a handsome sum of money for behoof of the poor, for the possession of the Sacred Pledges of Burns’ purest affection. He has no doubt that many will compete with him in the generous strife of obtaining the books, and that, if you see fit in this way to raise it, a considerable sum may be realized for the necessities of the poor.’

“On this memorial the Session pronounced the following judgment upon it :—

“ ‘The Kirk Session of the Old Parish of Greenock, with their Heritors, being met—*inter alia*, the Kirk Treasurer laid before the meeting a letter from Mr. Joseph J. Archibald, teacher at Largs, containing an offer of £10, for the effects (including furniture, books, &c. &c.) left by Widow Campbell, mother to Burns’ Highland Mary, which effects became the property of the Kirk Session, in consequence of the said Widow Campbell being, for several years, a pauper on their roll. The Session agreed to resign their hypothec in said effects to and in favor of the said Mr. Joseph J. Archibald, for the aforesaid sum of £10. and authorize their clerk to intimate this to him.’

“Notwithstanding the grave and formal tenor of this resolution, we suspect that the Bible is the unquestionable property of its present possessor, and if the account we have received of his character and conduct approach the truth, he is well worthy of remaining their custodier in perpetuity.”]

No. VII.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, Nov. 1792.

DEAR SIR,

I WAS just going to write to you, that on meeting with your Nannie, I had fallen violently in love with her. I thank you, therefore, for sending the charming rustic to me, in the dress you wish her to appear

before the public. She does you great credit, and will soon be admitted into the best company.

I regret that your song for the "Lea-rig" is so short; the air is easy, soon sung, and very pleasing: so that, if the singer stops at the end of two stanzas, it is a pleasure lost ere it is well possessed.

Although a dash of our native tongue and manners is doubtless peculiarly congenial and appropriate to our melodies, yet I shall be able to present a considerable number of the very Flowers of English Song, well adapted to those melodies, which, in England at least, will be the means of recommending them to still greater attention than they have procured there. But you will observe, my plan is, that every air shall in the first place have verses wholly by Scottish poets; and that those of English writers shall follow as additional songs for the choice of the singer.

What you say of the "Ewe-bughts" is just; I admire it, and never meant to supplant it. All I requested was, that you would try your hand on some of the inferior stanzas, which are apparently no part of the original song; but this I do not urge, because the song is of sufficient length, though those inferior stanzas be omitted, as they will be by the singer of taste. You must not think I expect all the songs to be of superlative merit: that were an unreasonable expectation. I am sensible that no poet can sit down doggedly to pen verses, and succeed well at all times.

I am highly pleased with your humorous and amorous rhapsody on "Bonnie Lesley:" it is a thousand times better than the "Collier's Lassie." "The deil he cou'd na scaith thee," &c. is an eccentric and happy thought. Do you not think, however, that the names of such old heroes as Alexander, sound rather queer, unless in pompous or mere burlesque verse? Instead of the line, "And never made anither," I would humbly suggest, "And ne'er made sic anither;" and I would fain have you substitute some other

line for "Return to Caledonie," in the last verse, because I think this alteration of the orthography, and of the sound of Caledonia, disfigures the word, and renders it Hudibrastic.

Of the other song—"My Wife's a winsome wee Thing," I think the first eight lines very good: but I do not admire the other eight, because four of them are a bare repetition of the first verses. I have been trying to spin a stanza, but could make nothing better than the following: do you mend it, or, as Yorick did with the love-letter, whip it up in your own way:—

O leeze me on my wee thing,
My bonnie blithesome wee thing;
Sae lang's I hae my wee thing,
I'll think my lot divine.

Tho' world's care we share o't,
And may see meikle mair o't,
Wi' her I'll blithely bear it,
And ne'er a word repine.

You perceive, my dear Sir, I avail myself of the liberty, which you condescend to allow me, by speaking freely what I think. Be assured, it is not my disposition to pick out the faults of any poem or picture I see: my first and chief object is to discover and be delighted with the beauties of the piece. If I sit down to examine critically, and at leisure, what, perhaps, you have written in haste, I may happen to observe careless lines, the reperusal of which might lead you to improve them. The wren will often see what has been overlooked by the eagle.—I remain yours faithfully, &c.

P. S. Your verses upon "Highland Mary" are just come to hand: they breathe the genuine spirit of poetry, and, like the music, will last for ever. Such verses, united to such an air, with the delicate harmony of Pleyel superadded, might form a treat wor-

thy of being presented to Apollo himself. I have heard the sad story of your Mary: you always seem inspired when you write of her.

No. VIII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

Dumfries, 1st Dec. 1792.

YOUR alterations of my "Nannie, O," are perfectly right. So are those of "My Wife's a winsome wee thing." Your alteration of the second stanza is a positive improvement. Now, my dear Sir, with the freedom which characterises our correspondence, I must not, cannot alter "Bonnie Lesley." You are right, the word "Alexander" makes the line a little uncouth, but I think the thought is pretty. Of Alexander, beyond all other heroes, it may be said, in the sublime language of Scripture, that "he went forth conquering and to conquer."

"For nature made her what she is.

And never made anither." (Such a person as she is.)

This is, in my opinion, more poetical than "Ne'er made sic anither." However, it is immaterial: make it either way. "Caledonie," I agree with you, is not so good a word as could be wished, though it is sanctioned in three or four instances by Allan Ramsay; but I cannot help it. In short, that species of stanza is the most difficult that I have ever tried.

The "Lea-rig" is as follows.—(Here the Poet gives the first two stanzas as before, pp. 12, 13, with the following in addition:—)

The hunter lo'es the morning sun,
To rouse the mountain deer, my jo;
At noon the fisher seeks the glen,
Along the burn to steer, my jo;

Gie me the hour o' gloamin gray,
 It maks my heart sae cheery, O,
 To meet thee on the lea-rig,
 My ain kind dearie O!
 I am interrupted. Yours, &c.

[The original reading of the second verse in "Bonnie Lesley," the reader will observe is restored in the text. Thomson decided in favor of the prosaic line,

"And ne'er made sic anither;"]

rejecting the more poetic one,

"And never made anither"]

Burns often adopted emendations in which his judgment did not concur, because they were pressed by his correspondent, to whose skill in the art of adapting words to music he looked with great confidence.—ED.]

No. IX.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

AULD ROB MORRIS.

I.

THERE's auld Rob Morris that wons in yon glen,
 He's the king o' guid fellows and wale of auld men;
 He has gowd in his coffers, he has owsen and kine,
 And ae bonnie lassie, his darling and mine.

II.

She's fresh as the morning, the fairest in May;
 She's sweet as the ev'ning amang the new hay;
 As blythe and as artless as the lamb on the lea,
 And dear to my heart as the light to my e'e.

III.

But oh ! she's an heiress,—auld Robin 's a laird,
 And my daddie has nought but a cot-house and yard ;
 A wooer like me maunna hope to come speed ;
 The wounds I must hide that must soon be my dead.

IV.

The day comes to me, but delight brings me nane ;
 The night comes to me, but my rest it is gane :
 I wander my lane like a night-troubled ghaist,
 And I sigh as my heart it wad burst in my breast.

V.

O had she but been of a lower degree,
 I then might hae hop'd she wad smil'd upon me !
 O, how past describing had then been my bliss,
 As now my distraction no words can express !

[The first two lines are taken from a song of considerable merit published in Ramsay's Miscellany : it is of a dramatic character :—

MITHER.

“ Auld Rob Morris that wons in yon glen,
 He's the king of good fellows and wale of auld men ;
 Has fourscore of black sheep, and fourscore too,
 Auld Rob Morris is the man ye maun lo'e.

DOUGHTER.

“ Haud your tongue, mither, and let that abee,
 For his eild, and my eild, can never agree ;
 They'll never agree, and that will be seen,
 For he is fourscore, and I'm but fifteen.

MITHER.

“ Tho' auld Rob Morris be an elderly man,
 Yet his auld brass it will buy a new pan ;
 Then doughter ye shouldna be sae ill to shoo,
 For Auld Rob Morris is the man ye maun lo'e.

DOUGHTER.

“ But auld Rob Morris I never will hae,
 His back is sae stiff, and his beard is grown gray ;
 I had titter die than live with him a year,
 Sae mair of Rob Morris I never will hear.”

The old song is sarcastic : that of Burns is tender ; the tune and the starting lines seem only to have been present to his fancy, when he took up the subject of the daughter of Rob Morris.—ED.]

DUNCAN GRAY.

I.

DUNCAN GRAY cam here to woo,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't,
On blythe yule night when we were fou,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.
Maggie coost her head fu' high,
Look'd asklent and unco skeigh,
Gart poor Duncan stand abeigh;
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

II.

Duncan fleech'd, and Duncan pray'd,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't;
Meg was deaf as Ailsa Craig,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.
Duncan sigh'd baith out and in,
Grat his een baith bleer't and blin',
Spak o' lowpin o'er a linn;
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

III.

Time and chance are but a tide,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't;
Slighted love is sair to bide,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.
Shall I, like a fool, quoth he,
For a haughty hizzie die?
She may gae to—France for me!
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

IV.

How it comes let doctors tell,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't;
 Meg grew sick—as he grew heal,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't.
 Something in her bosom wrings,
 For relief a sigh she brings;
 And O, her een, they spak sic things!
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

V.

Duncan was a lad o' grace,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't;
 Maggie's was a piteous case,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't.
 Duncan could na be her death,
 Swelling pity smoor'd his wrath;
 Now they're crouse and canty baith,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

4th December, 1792.

The foregoing I submit, my dear Sir, to your better judgment. Acquit them or condemn them as seemeth good in your sight. Duncan Gray is that kind of light-horse gallop of an air, which precludes sentiment. The ludicrous is its ruling feature.

[This song has nothing in common with the old wild song of "Duncan Gray," save the first line, and a part of the third; nor is it much akin to a song concerning the same hero published in the second volume. It is a great favorite, from its lively air and clever words: Wilkie made one of his best pictures out of these lines:—

"Maggie coost her head fu' high,
 Look'd asklent and unco skeigh,
 Gart poor Duncan stand abeigh;
 Ha! ha! the wooing o't."

The heroine as well as the hero was imaginary; but the experience of the Poet would have supplied him readily, had invention failed.—Ed.]

No. X.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

SONG.

Tune—"I had a Horse."

I.

O POORTITH cauld, and restless love,
Ye wreck my peace between ye ;
Yet poortith a' I could forgive,
An' 'twere na for my Jeanie.
O why should fate sic pleasure have,
Life's dearest bands untwining ?
Or why sae sweet a flower as love
Depend on Fortune's shining ?

II.

This warld's wealth when I think on,
It's pride, and a' the lave o't—
Fie, fie on silly coward man,
That he should be the slave o't!

III.

Her een sae bonnie blue betray
How she repays my passion ;
But prudence is her o'erword ay,
She talks of rank and fashion.

IV.

O wha can prudence think upon,
And sic a lassie by him ?
O wha can prudence think upon,
And sae in love as I am ?

V.

How blest the humble cotter's fate!*

He woes his simple dearie ;
The silly bogles, wealth and state,
Can never make them eerie.

* "The wild-wood Indian's fate," in the original MS.

O why should fate sic pleasure have,
 Life's dearest bands untwining?
 Or why sae sweet a flower as love
 Depend on Fortune's shining?

[Jean Lorimer of Kemmis-hall, in Kirkmahoe, was the heroine of this exquisite song. It is plain that the Poet looked upon her with the same eyes that a painter looks upon a model: her beauty of face and elegance of form—

“Her dimpled chin and cherry mou’—”

her ready wit, and her natural gaiety—her taste in song, and her skill in the dance, all united in endearing her to one whose muse caught inspiration from the presence of youth and beauty.
 —ED.]

GALLA WATER.

I.

THERE's braw, braw lads on Yarrow braes,
 That wander thro' the blooming heather;
 But Yarrow braes nor Ettrick shaws
 Can match the lads o' Galla Water.

II.

But there is ane, a secret ane,
 Aboon them a' I lo'e him better;
 And I'll be his, and he'll be mine,
 The bonnie lad o' Galla Water.

III.

Altho' his daddie was nae laird,
 And tho' I hae nae meikle tocher;
 Yet rich in kindest, truest love,
 We'll tent our flocks by Galla Water.

IV.

It ne'er was wealth, it ne'er was wealth,
 That coft contentment, peace or pleasure;
 The bands and bliss o' mutual love,
 O that's the chiefest warld's treasure!

Jan. 1793.

Many returns of the season to you, my dear Sir. How comes on your publication? will these two foregoing be of any service to you? I should like to know what songs you print to each tune, besides the verses to which it is set. In short, I would wish to give you my opinion on all the poetry you publish. You know it is my trade, and a man in the way of his trade may suggest useful hints that escape men of much superior parts and endowments in other things,

If you meet with my dear and much-valued Cunningham, greet him, in my name, with the compliments of the season.

Yours, &c.

[The Poet had in his thoughts an old song which he brushed up for the Museum when he composed these verses. The feeling of the old so fairly mastered him, that in the third verse he has been careless in the matter of rhyme, and contented himself with something like equality of sound. The Galla rises in Mid-Lothian, unites with Heriot Water, and passing Galashiels, is lost in the Tweed, near Abbotsford. It has long flowed in the light of song and romance:—

“Lothian lads are black wi’ reek,
Teviot-dale is little better;
But let them a’ say what they will,
The gree gangs ay down Galla Water.”—ED.]

No. XI.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, Jan. 20, 1793.

You make me happy, my dear Sir, and thousands will be happy to see the charming songs you have sent me. Many merry returns of the season to you and may you long continue among the sons and daughters of Caledonia, to delight them and to honor yourself.

The four last songs with which you favored me for "Auld Rob Morris," "Duncan Gray," "Galla Water," and "Cauld Kail," are admirable. Duncan is indeed a lad of grace, and his humor will endear him to every body.

The distracted lover in "Auld Rob," and the happy shepherdess in "Galla Water," exhibit an excellent contrast: they speak from genuine feeling, and powerfully touch the heart.

The number of songs which I had originally in view was limited, but I now resolve to include every Scotch air and song worth singing; leaving none behind but mere gleanings, to which the publishers of *omnigatherum* are welcome. I would rather be the editor of a collection from which nothing could be taken away, than of one to which nothing could be added. We intend presenting the subscribers with two beautiful stroke engravings; the one characteristic of the plaintive, and the other of the lively songs; and I have Dr. Beattie's promise of an essay upon the subject of our national music, if his health will permit him to write it. As a number of our songs have doubtless been called forth by particular events, or by the charms of peerless damsels, there must be many curious anecdotes relating to them.

The late Mr. Tytler, of Woodhouselee, I believe, knew more of this than any body; for he joined to the pursuits of an antiquary a taste for poetry, besides being a man of the world, and possessing an enthusiasm for music beyond most of his contemporaries. He was quite pleased with this plan of mine, for I may say it has been solely managed by me, and we had several long conversations about it when it was in embryo. If I could simply mention the name of the heroine of each song, and the incident which occasioned the verses, it would be gratifying. Pray, will you send me any information of this sort, as well with regard to your own songs, as the old ones?

To all the favorite songs of the plaintive or pastoral kind will be joined the delicate accompaniments, &c., of Pleyel. To those of the comic and humorous class, I think accompaniments scarcely necessary; they are chiefly fitted for the conviviality of the festive board, and a tuneful voice, with a proper delivery of the words, renders them perfect. Nevertheless, to these I propose adding bass accompaniments, because then they are fitted either for singing, or for instrumental performance, when there happens to be no singer. I mean to employ our right trusty friend Mr. Clarke to set the bass to these, which he assures me he will do *con amore*, and with much greater attention than he ever bestowed on any thing of the kind. But for this last class of airs I will not attempt to find more than one set of verses.

That eccentric bard, Peter Pindar, has started I know not how many difficulties about writing for the airs I sent to him, because of the peculiarity of their measure, and the trammels they impose on his flying Pegasus. I subjoin for your perusal the only one I have yet got from him, being for the fine air "Lord Gregory." The Scots verses printed with that air are taken from the middle of an old ballad, called "The Lass of Lochroyan," which I do not admire. I have set down the air, therefore, as a creditor of yours. Many of the jacobite songs are replete with wit and humor: might not the best of these be included in our volume of comic songs?

POSTSCRIPT.

FROM THE HON. A. ERSKINE.

MR. THOMSON has been so obliging as to give me a perusal of your songs. "Highland Mary" is most enchantingly pathetic, and "Duncan Gray" possesses

native genuine humor: "Spak o' lowpin o'er a linn," is a line of itself that should make you immortal. I sometimes hear of you from our mutual friend Cunningham, who is a most excellent fellow, and possesses above all men I know the charm of a most obliging disposition. You kindly promised me, about a year ago, a collection of your unpublished productions, religious and amorous; I know from experience how irksome it is to copy. If you will get any trusty person in Dumfries to write them over fair, I will give Peter Hill whatever money he asks for his trouble, and I certainly shall not betray your confidence.

I am your hearty admirer,

ANDREW ERSKINE.

No. XII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

26th January, 1793.

I APPROVE greatly, my dear Sir, of your plans. Dr. Beattie's essay will of itself be a treasure. On my part I mean to draw up an appendix to the Doctor's essay, containing my stock of anecdotes, &c., of our Scots songs. All the late Mr. Tytler's anecdotes I have by me, taken down in the course of my acquaintance with him, from his own mouth. I am such an enthusiast, that in the course of my several peregrinations through Scotland, I made a pilgrimage to the individual spot from which every song took its rise, "Lochaber" and the "Braes of Ballenden" excepted. So far as the locality, either from the title of the air, or the tenor of the song, could be ascertained, I have paid my devotions at the particular shrine of every Scots muse.

I do not doubt but you might make a very valuable

collection of jacobite songs, but would it give no offence? In the mean time, do not you think that some of them, particularly "The Sow's Tail to Geordie," as an air, with other words, might be well worth a place in your collection of lively songs?

If it were possible to procure songs of merit, it would be proper to have one set of Scots words to every air, and that the set of words to which the notes ought to be set. There is a *naïveté*, a pastoral simplicity, in a slight intermixture of Scots words and phraseology, which is more in unison (at least to my taste, and, I will add, to every genuine Caledonian taste) with the simple pathos, or rustic sprightliness of our native music, than any English verses whatever.

The very name of Peter Pindar is an acquisition to your work. His "Gregory" is beautiful. I have tried to give you a set of stanzas in Scots, on the same subject, which are at your service. Not that I intend to enter the lists with Peter; that would be presumption indeed. My song, though much inferior in poetic merit, has, I think, more of the ballad simplicity in it

LORD GREGORY.

I.

O MIRK, mirk is this midnight hour,
And loud the tempest's roar;
A waefu' wanderer seeks thy tow'r,
Lord Gregory, ope thy door!

II.

An exile frae her father's ha',
And a' for loving thee;
At least some pity on me shaw,
If love it may na be.

III.

Lord Gregory, mind'st thou not the grove,
 By bonnie Irwin-side,
 Where first I own'd that virgin-love
 I lang, lang had denied?

IV.

How aften didst thou pledge and vow
 Thou wad for aye be mine;
 And my fond heart, itsel' sae true,
 It ne'er mistrusted thine.

V.

Hard is thy heart, Lord Gregory,
 And flinty is thy breast—
 Thou dart of heaven that flashest by,
 O wilt thou give me rest!

VI.

Ye mustering thunders from above,
 Your willing victim see!
 But spare and pardon my fause love,
 His wrangs to heaven and me!

[“Fair Annie of Lochroyan,” the ballad which Thomson says he does not admire, is one of the most beautiful compositions in the language: neither the song of Burns, nor the verses of Wolcot, equal it. There are many versions, and all are good: here are two of the stanzas:—

“Sweet Annie built a bonnie ship,
 And set her on the sea,
 The sails were of the damask'd silk,
 The masts of silver free:
 The gladsome waters sung below,
 The sweet winds sung above,
 Make way for Annie of Lochroyan,
 She comes to seek her love!

“A gentle wind came with a sweep,
 And stretched her silken sail,
 When up there came a reaver rude,
 With many a shout and hail:

O! touch her not, my mariners a',
 Such loveliness goes free;
 Make way for Annie of Lochroyan,
 She seeks Lord Gregorie!"

Those who are intimate with ballad lore will be surprised to hear that Wolcot complained, with many an oath, that Burns sought to rob him of the original merit of Lord Gregory. His song was, indeed, composed first, but the idea of both is borrowed from the old strain. Here is Wolcot's version:—

LORD GREGORY.

"Ah ope, Lord Gregory, thy door,
 A midnight wanderer sighs,
 Hard rush the rains, the tempests roar,
 And lightnings cleave the skies.

"Who comes with woe at this drear night—
 A pilgrim of the gloom?
 If she whose love did once delight,
 My cot shall yield her room.

"Alas! thou heard'st a pilgrim mourn,
 That once was priz'd by thee:
 Think of the ring by yonder burn
 Thou gav'st to love and me.

"But should'st thou not poor Marian know,
 I'll turn my feet and part;
 And think the storms that round me blow
 Far kinder than thy heart."

In pathetic simplicity, both of language and thought, neither of the rival lyrists equalled the nameless minstrel.—ED.]

No. XIII.

BURNS TO—G. THOMSON.

20th March, 1793.

MARY MORISON.

Tune—"Bide ye yet."

I.

O MARY, at thy window be,
 It is the wish'd, the trysted hour!

Those smiles and glances let me see
 That make the miser's treasure poor :
 How blithely wad I bide the stoure,
 A weary slave frae sun to sun ;
 Could I the rich reward secure,
 The lovely Mary Morison.

II.

Yestreen, when to the trembling string
 The dance gaed thro' the lighted ha',
 To thee my fancy took its wing,
 I sat, but neither heard or saw :
 Tho' this was fair, and that was braw,
 And yon the toast of a' the town,
 I sigh'd, and said amang them a',
 "Ye are na Mary Morison."

III.

O Mary, canst thou wreck his peace,
 Wha for thy sake wad gladly die ?
 Or canst thou break that heart of his,
 Whase only faut is loving thee ?
 If love for love thou wilt na gie,
 At least be pity to me shown ;
 A thought ungentle canna be
 The thought o' Mary Morison.

MY DEAR SIR,

The song prefixed is one of my juvenile works. I leave it in your hands. I do not think it very remarkable, either for its merits or demerits. It is impossible (at least I feel it so in my stinted powers) to be always original, entertaining, and witty.

What is become of the list, &c. of your songs? I shall be out of all temper with you by and by. I have always looked on myself as the prince of indolent correspondents, and valued myself accordingly ; and I will not, cannot bear rivalry from you, nor any body else.

["Of all the productions of Burns," says Hazlitt, "the pathetic and serious love-songs which he has left behind him in the manner of the old ballads, are perhaps those which take the deepest and most lasting hold of the mind. Such are the lines to Mary Morison, those entitled 'Jessy,' and the song beginning 'O, my love is like a red, red rose.'"]—ED.]

No. XIV.

BURNS TO—G. THOMSON.

March, 1793.

WANDERING WILLIE.

I.

HERE awa, there awa, wandering Willie,
Now tired with wandering, haud awa hame;
Come to my bosom my ae only dearie,
And tell me thou bring'st me my Willie the same.

II.

Loud blew the cauld winter winds at our parting;
It was na the blast brought the tear in my e'e:
Now welcome the simmer and welcome my Willie,
The simmer to nature, my Willie to me.

III.

Ye hurricanes, rest in the cave o' your slumbers!
O how your wild horrors a lover alarms!
Awaken ye breezes, blow gently ye billows,
And waft my dear laddie ance mair to my arms.

IV.

But if he's forgotten his faithfullest Nannie,
O still flow between us, thou wide roaring main;
May I never see it, may I never trow it,
But, dying, believe that my Willie's my ain!

I leave it to you, my dear Sir, to determine whether the above, or the old "Thro' the lang muir," be the best.

[The idea of "Wandering Willie" is taken from an old song published by Herd, which commences in these words :—

"Here awa, there awa, here awa, Willie,
Here awa, there awa, here awa hame;
Lang have I sought thee, dear have I bought thee,
Now I hae gotten my Willie again.

"Through the lang muir I have followed my Willie,
Through the lang muir I have followed him hame,
Whatever betide us, nought shall divide us,
Love now rewards all my sorrow and pain."

Older words than these may still be heard "lilted" by a shepherd lad or lass on a pasture hill, or in some sequestered glen :—

"Gin that ye meet my love, kiss her and clap her,
An' gin ye meet my love, dinna think shame;
O gin ye meet my love, kiss her and daut her,
And show her the way to haud away hame."

The heroine of the "Wandering Willie" of Burns is said to have been the lovely and accomplished Mrs. Riddell.—ED.]

No. XV.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

OPEN THE DOOR TO ME, OH!

WITH ALTERATIONS.

I.

Oh, open the door, some pity to show,
Oh, open the door to me, Oh! *
Tho' thou hast been false, I'll never prove true,
Oh, open the door to me, Oh!

II.

Cauld is the blast upon my pale cheek,
But caulder thy love for me, Oh!
The frost that freezes the life at my heart,
Is nought to my pains frae thee, Oh!

* This second line was originally—"If love it may na be, Oh!"

III.

The wan moon is setting behind the white wave,
 And time is setting with me, Oh !
 False friends, false love, farewell ! for mair
 I'll ne'er trouble them, nor thee, Oh !

IV.

She has open'd the door, she has open'd it wide ;
 She sees his pale corse on the plain, Oh !
 My true love ! she cried, and sank down by his side,
 Never to rise again, Oh !

I do not know whether this song be really mended.

 No. XVI.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

 JESSIE.

Tune—" *Bonnie Dundee.* "

I.

TRUE hearted was he, the sad swain o' the Yarrow,
 And fair are the maids on the banks o' the Ayr,
 But by the sweet side o' the Nith's winding river,
 Are lovers as faithful, and maidens as fair :
 To equal young Jessie seek Scotland all over ;
 To equal young Jessie you seek it in vain ;
 Grace, beauty, and elegance fether her lover,
 And maidenly modesty fixes the chain.

II.

O, fresh is the rose in the gay, dewy morning,
 And sweet is the lily at evening close ;
 But in the fair presence o' the lovely young Jessie
 Unseen is the lily, unheeded the rose,
 Love sits in her smile, a wizard ensnaring ;
 Enthron'd in her een he delivers his law :
 And still to her charms she alone is a stranger—
 Her modest demeanor's the jewel of a' !

[Jessie Staig, the heroine of this song, married Major Miller, the second son of the Laird of Dalswinton. She died in early life, and is still affectionately remembered in her native valley; —the memory of beauty and gentleness is long passing away. —ED.]

No. XVII.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, 2nd April, 1793.

I WILL not recognise the title you give yourself, “the prince of *indolent* correspondents;” but if the adjective were taken away, I think the title would then fit you exactly. It gives me pleasure to find you can furnish anecdotes with respect to most of the songs: these will be a literary curiosity.

I now send you my list of the songs, which I believe will be found nearly complete. I have put down the first lines of all the English songs which I propose giving in addition to the Scotch verses. If any others occur to you, better adapted to the character of the airs, pray mention them, when you favor me with your strictures upon every thing else relating to the work.

Pleyel has lately sent me a number of the songs, with his symphonies and accompaniments added to them. I wish you were here, that I might serve up some of them to you with your own verses, by way of dessert after dinner. There is so much delightful fancy in the symphonies, and such a delicate simplicity in the accompaniments: they are, indeed, beyond all praise.

I am very much pleased with the several last productions of your muse: your “Lord Gregory,” in my estimation, is more interesting than Peter’s, beautiful as his is. Your “Here awa, Willie,” must undergo some alterations to suit the air. Mr. Erskine and I have been conning it over; he will suggest what is necessary to make them a fit match.

The gentleman I have mentioned, whose fine taste you are no stranger to, is so well pleased both with the musical and poetical part of our work, that he has volunteered his assistance, and has already written four songs for it, which, by his own desire, I send for your perusal.

[Thomson and Erskine it seems sat in judgment upon "Wandering Willie," and, in harmonizing it to the air, squeezed much of the poetic spirit out:—they reproduced it in these words:—

"Here awa, there awa, wandering Willie,
Here awa, there awa, haud awa hame;
Come to my bosom, my ain only dearie,
Tell me thou bring'st me my Willie the same.

"Winter winds blew loud and cauld at our parting,
Fears for my Willie brought tears in my e'e,
Welcome now simmer, and welcome my Willie,
As simmer to nature, so Willie to me.

"Rest, ye wild storms, in the cave o' your slumbers,
How your dread howling, a lover alarms!
Blow soft ye breezes! roll gently ye billows!
And waft my dear laddie ance more to my arms.

"But oh, if he's faithless, and minds na his Nannie,
Flow still between us thou dark-heaving main!
May I never see it, may I never trow it,
While dying I think that my Willie's my ain."

Burns, with his usual judgment, adopted some of these alterations, and rejected others. The last edition is as follows:—

"Here awa, there awa, wandering Willie,
Here awa, there awa, haud awa hame;
Come to my bosom, my ain only dearie,
Tell me thou bring'st me my Willie the same.

"Winter winds blew loud and cauld at our parting,
Fears for my Willie brought tears in my e'e,
Welcome now simmer, and welcome my Willie,
The simmer to nature, my Willie to me.

"Rest, ye wild storms, in the cave of your slumbers,
How your dread howling a lover alarms,
Wauken ye breezes, row gently ye billows,
And waft my dear laddie ance mair to my arms.

"But oh, if he's faithless, and minds na his Nannie,
Flow still between us thou wide-roaring main;
May I never see it, may I never trow it,
But, dying, believe that my Willie's my ain."

“Several of the alterations,” says Currie, “seem to be of little importance in themselves, and were adopted, it may be presumed, for the sake of suiting the words better to the music. The Homeric epithet for the sea, dark-heaving, suggested by Mr. Erskine, is in itself, more beautiful, as well, perhaps, as more sublime, than wide-roaring, which he has retained; but as it is only applicable to a placid state of the sea, or at most to the swell left on its surface after the storm is over, it gives a picture of that element not so well adapted to the ideas of eternal separation which the fair mourner is supposed to imprecate. From the original song of ‘Here awa’ Willie,’ Burns has borrowed nothing but the second line and part of the first. ‘The superior excellence of this beautiful poem, will, it is hoped, justify the different editions of it which we have given.’—ED.]

No. XVIII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

THE POOR AND HONEST SODGER.

Tune—“*The Mill, Mill, O.*”

I.

WHEN wild war's deadly blast was blawn,
 And gentle peace returning,
 Wi' mony a sweet babe fatherless,
 And mony a widow mourning;
 I left the lines and tented field,
 Where lang I'd been a lodger,
 My humble knapsack a' my wealth,
 A poor and honest sodger.

II.

A leal, light heart was in my breast,
 My hand unstain'd wi' plunder;
 And for fair Scotia, hame again,
 I cheery on did wander.
 I thought upon the banks o' Coil,
 I thought upon my Nancy,
 I thought upon the witching smile
 That caught my youthful fancy.

III.

At length I reach'd the bonnie glen,
Where early life I sported ;
I pass'd the mill, and trysting thorn,
Where Nancy aft I courted ;
Wha spied I but my ain dear maid,
Down by her mother's dwelling !
And turn'd me round to hide the flood
That in my een was swelling.

IV.

Wi' alter'd voice, quoth I, sweet lass,
Sweet as yon hawthorn's blossom,
O! happy, happy may he be
That 's dearest to thy bosom :
My purse is light, I've far to gang,
And fain wad be thy lodger ;
I've serv'd my king and country lang—
Take pity on a sodger.

V.

Sae wistfully she gaz'd on me,
And lovelier was than ever ;
Quo' she, a sodger ance I lo'ed,
Forget him shall I never :
Our humble cot, and hamely fare,
Ye freely shall partake it,
That gallant badge—the dear cockade—
Ye're welcome for the sake o't.

VI.

She gaz'd—she redden'd like a rose—
Syne pale like onie lily ;
She sank within my arms, and cried
Art thou my ain dear Willie ?
By Him who made yon sun and sky—
By whom true love's regarded,
I am the man ; and thus may still
True lovers be rewarded !

VII.

The wars are o'er, and I'm come hame,
 And find thee still true-hearted ;
 Tho' poor in gear, we're rich in love,
 And mair we'se ne'er be parted.
 Quo' she, my grandsire left me gowd,
 A mailen plenish'd fairly ;
 And come, my faithful sodger lad,
 Thou'rt welcome to it dearly !

VIII.

For gold the merchant ploughs the main,
 The farmer ploughs the manor ;
 But glory is the sodger's prize,
 The sodger's wealth is honor ;
 The brave poor sodger ne'er despise,
 Nor count him as a stranger ;
 Remember he's his country's stay,
 In day and hour of danger.

[The air of this song and some of the words incline me to believe that Burns had "The mill, mill, O!" of Allan Ramsay in his mind, when he wrote it. But the verses of the elder bard are inferior to those of his great successor, and moreover the story they tell is far from delicate. The first four lines may be quoted without a blush :—

"Beneath a green shade, I fand a fair maid
 Was sleeping sound and still, O ;
 A' lowing wi' love, my fancy did rove
 Around her wi' good will, O."

The four concluding lines belong to an older lyric :—

"O the mill, mill, O, and the kiln, kiln, O !
 And the coggin o' the wheel, O ;
 The sack and the seive a' thae ye maun leave,
 And round wi' a sodger reel, O."

"It is alledged by some," says Geddes, in his *Saint's Recreation*, written in 1670—and not without some color of reason,—
 "that many of our good airs or tunes are made by good angels,
 but the lines of our songs by devils." The words of the

“Godly Geddes,” were true of many of the old popular songs of Caledonia, and “The mill, mill, O!” among the number. The third and fourth lines of the first verse of the song of Burns, were altered thus by Thomson:—

“And eyes again with pleasure beamed,
That had been bleared with mourning.”

This change robbed the song of a natural and mournful image.

“The Poor and honest Sodger” was sung in every vale, and on every hill; in every cot-house, village, and town: yet the man who wrote it was supposed by the mean and spiteful to be no well-wisher to his country.—ED.]

MEG O' THE MILL.

Tune—“*Hey! bonnie lass, will you lie in a barrack?*”

I.

O KEN ye what Meg o' the Mill has gotten?
An' ken ye what Meg o' the Mill has gotten?
She has gotten a coof wi' a claute o' siller,
And broken the heart o' the barley Miller.

II.

The Miller was strappin, the Miller was ruddy;
A heart like a lord and a hue like a lady:
The Laird was a widdiefu', bleerit knurl;
She's left the guid-fellow and ta'en the churl.

III.

The Miller he hecht her a heart leal and loving;
The Laird did address her wi' matter mair moving,
A fine pacing horse wi' a clear chained bridle,
A whip by her side and a bonnie side-saddle.

IV.

O wae on the siller, it is sae prevailing;
And wae on the love that is fixed on a mailen!
A tocher's nae word in a true lover's parle,
But, gie me my love, and a fig for the warl!

[Burns touched up the old song of “Meg o’ the Mill” for Johnson’s Museum; it will be found among the Poet’s notes on that work. One of the old verses is still remembered in the north—

“O wat ye what Meg o’ the Mill has gotten?
And wat ye what Meg o’ the Mill has gotten?
A braw new gown, and the tail o’t is rotten,
And that’s what Meg o’ the Mill has gotten.

Another verse will show the bold humor in which our ancestors loved to indulge—

“And ken ye how Meg o’ the Mill was married?
And ken ye how Meg o’ the Mill was married?
The priest he was oxtored, the bridegroom was carried,
And how could Meg o’ the Mill get married?”

The licence of a Scottish bridal—if we may believe the northern painters and poets—was very great: the revelry lasted three days and nights, according to Ramsay; and both David Allan and David Wilkie intimate that men and women’s hearts overflowed with joy:—

“Some were fu’ o’ love divine,
And others fu’ o’ brandy.”

The riding for the “bruse”—the bedding—the stocking-throwing—the eating, the dancing, and the drinking, would require a volume.—ED.]

No. XIX.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

7th April, 1793.

THANK you, my dear Sir, for your packet. You cannot imagine how much this business of composing for your publication has added to my enjoyments. What with my early attachment to ballads, your book, &c., ballad-making is now as completely my hobby-horse, as ever fortification was Uncle Toby’s; so I’ll e’en canter it away till I come to the limit of my race (God grant that I may take the right side of the winning-post!), and then, cheerfully looking back on the honest folks with whom I have been happy, I shall say,

or sing, "Sae merry as we a' hae been," and raising my last looks to the whole human race, the last words of the voice of Coila shall be "Good night, and joy be wi' you a'!" So much for my last words: now for a few present remarks, as they have occurred at random on looking over your list.

The first lines of "The last time I came o'er the moor," and several other lines in it, are beautiful; but in my opinion—pardon me, revered shade of Ramsay! the song is unworthy of the divine air. I shall try to make or mend. "For ever, Fortune, wilt thou prove," is a charming song; but "Logan Burn and Logan Braes" are sweetly susceptible of rural imagery; I'll try that likewise, and, if I succeed, the other song may class among the English ones. I remember the two last lines of a verse in some of the old songs of "Logan Water" (for I know a good many different ones), which I think pretty:—

"Now my dear lad maun face his faes,
Far, far frae me and Logan braes."

"My Patie is a lover gay" is unequal. "His Mind is never muddy," is a muddy expression indeed.

"Then I'll resign and marry Patie,
And syne my cockernony!"

This is surely far unworthy of Ramsay, or your book. My song, "Rigs of Barley," to the same tune, does not altogether please me; but if I can mend it and thresh a few loose sentiments out of it, I will submit it to your consideration. "The Lass o' Patie's Mill" is one of Ramsay's best songs; but there is one loose sentiment in it which my much-valued friend, Mr. Erskine, will take into his critical consideration. In Sir J. Sinclair's Statistical volumes are two claims; one, I think, from Aberdeenshire, and the other from Ayrshire, for the honor of this song. The following anecdote, which I had from the present Sir William Cunningham, of Robertland, who had it of the late John, Earl of Loudon, I can, on such authorities, believe:—

Allan Ramsay was residing at Loudon castle with the then Earl, father to Earl John ; and one forenoon, riding or walking out together, his Lordship and Allan passed a sweet, romantic spot on Irwine Water, still called "Patie's Mill," where a bonnie lass was "tedding hay, bare-headed, on the green." My Lord observed to Allan that it would be a fine theme for a song. Ramsay took the hint, and, lingering behind, he composed the first sketch of it, which he produced at dinner.

"One day I heard Mary say," is a fine song ; but, for consistency's sake, alter the name "Adonis." Were there ever such banns published as a purpose of marriage between Adonis and Mary ? I agree with you that my song, "There's nought but Care on every hand," is much superior to "Poortith cauld." The original song, "The Mill, Mill, O," though excellent, is, on account of delicacy, inadmissible ; still I like the title, and think a Scottish song would suit the notes best ; and let your chosen song, which is very pretty, follow, as an English set. "The banks of the Dee" is, you know, literally, "Langolee," to slow time. The song is well enough, but has some false imagery in it ; for instance,

"And sweetly the nightingale sung from the *tree*."

In the first place, the nightingale sings in a low bush, but never from a tree ; and in the second place, there never was a nightingale seen, or heard on the banks of the Dee, or on the banks of any other river in Scotland. Exotic rural imagery is always comparatively flat. If I could hit on another stanza, equal to "The small birds rejoice," &c. I do myself honestly avow that I think it a superior song. "John Anderson, my Joe," the song to this tune in Johnson's Museum is my composition, and I think it not my worst : if it suits you, take it and

welcome. Your collection of sentimental and pathetic songs is, in my opinion, very complete; but not so your comic ones. Where are "Tullochgorum," "Lumps o' Puddin'," "Tibbie Fowler," and several others, which, in my humble judgment, are well worthy of preservation? There is also one sentimental song of mine in the Museum, which never was known but of the immediate neighbourhood, until I got it taken down from a country girl's singing. It is called "Craigieburn Wood;" and, in the opinion of Mr. Clarke, is one of the sweetest Scottish songs. He is quite an enthusiast about it; and I would take his taste in Scottish music against the taste of most connoisseurs.

You are quite right in inserting the last five in your list, though they are certainly Irish. "Shepherds, I have lost my love!" is to me a heavenly air—what would you think of a set of Scottish verses to it? I have made one to it a good while ago, but in its original state it is not quite a lady's song. I enclose an altered, not amended, copy for you, if you choose to set the tune to it, and let the Irish verses follow.

Mr. Erskine's songs are all pretty, but his "Lone Vale" is divine.

Yours, &c.

Let me know just how you like these random hints.

[In this letter Burns calls himself the voice of Coila, in imitation of Ossian, who denominates himself the voice of Cona. He was an ardent admirer of the Celtic bard, and carried his poems frequently about with him. "Sae merry as we twa hae been," and "Good night, and joy be wi' you a'," are the names of two northern tunes. The song of "The small birds rejoice," or "The Chevalier's Lament," will be found in the last volume; and the lyric written to the tune of "Shepherds, I have lost my love," is there also under the name of "The gowden locks of Anna." Thomson, it appears, did not approve of the song, even in its amended state: it has, however, obtained the approbation of a divine of the kirk of Scotland, and laymen need no longer hesitate.—ED.]

No XX.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, April, 1793.

I REJOICE to find, my dear Sir, that ballad-making continues to be your hobby-horse.—Great pity 'twould be were it otherwise. I hope you will amble it away for many a year, and “witch the world with your horsemanship.”

I know there are a good many lively songs of merit that I have not put down in the list sent you; but I have them all in my eye. “My Patie is a lover gay,” though a little unequal, is a natural and very pleasing song, and I humbly think we ought not to displace or alter it, except the last stanza.

[Currie tells, that in the original letter Thomson hazarded many observations on Scottish songs, and on the manner of adapting the words to the music, which, at his desire, were suppressed. To these observations Burns alludes in his answer, and intimates that he thinks his friend is a little too ready to sacrifice simplicity for the sake of something striking. No one can hope to compose a song to a tune unless he can either hum it, or whistle it, or sing it: the music commands the proper words, and a true poet will obey it, as Burns always did, save in one or two instances, where he evidently had not mastered the air. He tells us that he was in the habit of crooning the tune while in the act of composing it: nor will a song that echoes the music be obtained on easier terms.—ED.]

No XXI.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

April, 1793.

I HAVE yours, my dear Sir, this moment. I shall answer it and your former letter, in my desultory way of saying whatever comes uppermost.

The business of many of our tunes, wanting at the beginning what fiddlers call a starting-note, is often a rub to us poor rhymers.

“There’s braw, braw lads on Yarrow braes,
That wander thro’ the blooming heather.”

you may alter to

“Braw, braw lads on Yarrow braes,
Ye wander,” &c.

My song, “Here awa, there awa,” as amended by Mr. Erskine, I entirely approve of, and return you.

Give me leave to criticise your taste in the only thing in which it is, in my opinion, reprehensible. You know I ought to know something of my own trade. Of pathos, sentiment, and point you are a complete judge; but there is a quality more necessary than either in a song, and which is the very essence of a ballad; I mean simplicity: now, if I mistake not, this last feature you are a little apt to sacrifice to the foregoing.

Ramsay, as every other poet, has not been always equally happy in his pieces: still I cannot approve of taking such liberties with an author as Mr. W. proposes doing with “The last time I came o’er the moor.” Let a poet, if he chooses, take up the idea of another, and work it into a piece of his own; but to mangle the works of the poor bard whose tuneful tongue is now mute for ever, in the dark and narrow house—by Heaven, ’twould be sacrilege! I grant that Mr. W.’s version is an improvement; but, I know Mr. W. well, and esteem him much; let him mend the song as the Highlander mended his gun: he gave it a new stock, a new lock, and a new barrel.

I do not, by this, object to leaving out improper stanzas, where that can be done without spoiling the whole. One stanza in “The Lass o’ Patie’s Mill” must be left out: the song will be nothing worse for it. I am not sure if we can take the same liberty with “Corn Rigs are bonnie.” Perhaps it might want the

last stanza, and be the better for it. "Cauld Kail in Aberdeen," you must leave with me yet a while. I have vowed to have a song to that air, on the lady whom I attempted to celebrate in the verses, "Poortith cauld and restless love." At any rate, my other song, "Green grow the Rashes," will never suit. That song is current in Scotland under the old title, and to the merry old tune of that name; which, of course, would mar the progress of your song to celebrity. Your book will be the standard of Scots songs for the future: let this idea ever keep your judgment on the alarm.

I send a song, on a celebrated toast in this country, to suit "Bonnie Dundee." I send you also a ballad to the "Mill, Mill, O."

"The last time I came o'er the moor," I would fain attempt to make a Scots song for, and let Ramsay's be the English set. You shall hear from me soon. When you go to London on this business, can you come by Dumfries? I have still several MS. Scots airs by me which I have picked up, mostly from the singing of country lasses. They please me vastly; but your learned lugs would perhaps be displeased with the very feature for which I like them. I call them simple; you would pronounce them silly. Do you know a fine air, called "Jackie Hume's Lament?" I have a song of considerable merit to that air. I'll enclose you both the song and tune, as I had them ready to send to Johnson's Museum. I send you likewise, to me, a beautiful little air, which I had taken down from *viva voce*.—Adieu!

No. XXII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

April, 1793.

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAD scarcely put my last letter into the post office, when I took up the subject of "The last time I came o'er the moor," and ere I slept drew the outlines of the foregoing. How far I have succeeded, I leave on this, as on every other occasion, to you to decide. I own my vanity is flattered, when you give my songs a place in your elegant and superb work; but to be of service to the work is my first wish. As I have often told you, I do not in a single instance wish you, out of compliment to me, to insert any thing of mine. One hint let me give you—whatever Mr. Pleyel does, let him not alter one iota of the original Scottish airs; I mean in the song department; but let our national music preserve its native features. They are, I own, frequently wild and irreducible to the more modern rules; but on that very eccentricity, perhaps, depends a great part of their effect.

No XXIII.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, 26th April, 1793.

I HEARTILY thank you, my dear Sir, for your last two letters, and the songs which accompanied them. I am always both instructed and entertained by your observations; and the frankness with which you speak out your mind is to me highly agreeable. It is very possible I may not have the true idea of simplicity in composition. I confess there are several songs, of Allan Ramsay's for example, that I think silly enough,

which another person, more conversant than I have been with country people, would perhaps call simple and natural. But the lowest scenes of simple nature will not please generally, if copied precisely as they are. The poet, like the painter, must select what will form an agreeable as well as a natural picture. On this subject it were easy to enlarge ; but at present suffice it to say, that I consider simplicity, rightly understood, as a most essential quality in composition, and the groundwork of beauty in all the arts. I will gladly appropriate your interesting new ballad, "When wild War's deadly Blast," &c., to the "Mill, Mill, O," as well as the two other songs to their respective airs ; but the third and fourth lines of the first verse must undergo some little alteration in order to suit the music. Pleyel does not alter a single note of the songs. That would be absurd indeed ! With the airs which he introduces into the sonatas, I allow him to take such liberties as he pleases, but that has nothing to do with the songs.

P. S.—I wish you would do as you proposed with your "Rigs of Barley." If the loose sentiments are threshed out of it, I will find an air for it ; but as to this there is no hurry.

[It is quite plain, from this letter, that Thomson was at issue with his correspondent on the subject matter of simplicity. Burns, like old Burton, was a plain man, calling a "spade a spade :—" simplicity of expression was dear to his heart, and he considered it as essential in song. Thomson says, "I confess there are several songs, of Allan Ramsay's for example, that I think silly enough, which another person, more conversant than I have been with country people, would perhaps call simple and natural." He desired to vindicate the diplomatic language of the polished city ; but Burns felt that elegance and simplicity were "sisters twin," and that words which failed to convey a clear meaning, or present a distinct image were not for him.—ED.]

No. XXIV.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

June, 1793.

WHEN I tell you, my dear Sir, that a friend of mine, in whom I am much interested, has fallen a sacrifice to these accursed times, you will easily allow that it might unhinge me for doing any good among ballads. My own loss, as to pecuniary matters, is trifling: but the total ruin of a much-loved friend is a loss indeed. Pardon my seeming inattention to your last commands.

I cannot alter the disputed lines in the "Mill, Mill, O."* What you think a defect, I esteem as a positive beauty: so you see how doctors differ. I shall now, with as much alacrity as I can muster, go on with your commands.

You know Fraser, the hautboy-player in Edinburgh—he is here, instructing a band of music for a fencible corps quartered in this country. Among many of his airs that please me, there is one, well known as a reel, by the name of "The Quaker's Wife," and which I remember a grand-aunt of mine used to sing, by the name of "Liggeram Cosh, my bonnie wee lass." Mr. Fraser plays it slow, and with an expression that quite charms me. I became such an enthusiast about it that I made a song for it, which I here subjoin, and enclose Fraser's set of the tune. If they hit your fancy they are at your service; if not, return me the tune, and I will put it in Johnson's Museum. I think the song is not in my worst manner.

* The lines were the third and fourth:—

“Wi’ mony a sweet babe fatherless,
And mony a widow mourning.”

BLYTHE HAE I BEEN.

Tune—" *Liggeram Cosh.*"

I.

BLYTHE hae I been on yon hill
As the lambs before me ;
Careless ilka thought and free
As the breeze flew o'er me.
Now nae langer sport and play,
Mirth or sang can please me ;
Lesley is sae fair and coy,
Care and anguish seize me.

II.

Heavy, heavy is the task,
Hopeless love declaring :
Trembling, I dow nocht but glow'r,
Sighing, dumb, despairing !
If she winna ease the thraws
In my bosom swelling ;
Underneath the grass-green sod
Soon maun be my dwelling.

I should wish to hear how this pleases you.

[Though Miss Lesley Baillie, the heroine of this song, passed before the eyes of the Poet like a vision which never returns, her loveliness seems to have been long remembered. In expressing the hopelessness of misplaced love, Burns has surpassed all other poets : this song, and that of Jessy, would go far to sustain the assertion : but there are others of equal tenderness, which cannot but be present to the minds of all readers. Of the old song, from which he has borrowed nothing but the air, little is known : it was sometimes sung in Nithsdale, and, if I remember right, had a touch of the nursery about it.—ED.]

No. XXV.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

June 25th, 1793.

HAVE you ever, my dear Sir, felt your bosom ready to burst with indignation on reading of those mighty villains who divide kingdom against kingdom, desolate provinces, and lay nations waste, out of the wantonness of ambition, or often from still more ignoble passions? In a mood of this kind to-day I recollected the air of "Logan Water," and it occurred to me that its querulous melody probably had its origin from the plaintive indignation of some swelling, suffering heart, fired at the tyrannic strides of some public destroyer, and overwhelmed with private distress, the consequence of a country's ruin. If I have done any thing at all like justice to my feelings, the following song, composed in three-quarters of an hour's meditation in my elbow-chair, ought to have some merit:—

LOGAN WATER.

I.

O LOGAN, sweetly didst thou glide,
That day I was my Willie's bride!
And years sinsyne hae o'er us run,
Like Logan to the simmer sun.
But now thy flow'ry banks appear
Like drumlie winter, dark and drear,
While my dear lad maun face his faes,
Far, far frae me and Logan braes!

II.

Again the merry month o' May
Has made our hills and valleys gay;
The birds rejoice in leafy bowers,
The bees hum round the breathing flowers:

Blythe morning lifts his rosy eye,
 And evening's tears are tears of joy :
 My soul, delightless, a' surveys,
 While Willie's far frae Logan braes.

III.

Within yon milk-white hawthorn bush,
 Amang her nestlings sits the thrush ;
 Her faithfu' mate will share her toil,
 Or, wi' his song her cares beguile ;
 But I, wi' my sweet nurslings here,
 Nae mate to help, nae mate to cheer,
 Pass widow'd nights and joyless days,
 While Willie's far frae Logan braes.

IV.

O wae upon you, men o' state,
 That brethren rouse to deadly hate !
 As ye make mony a fond heart mourn,
 Sae may it on your heads return !
 How can your flinty hearts enjoy
 The widow's tears, the orphan's cry ?*
 But soon may peace bring happy days
 And Willie hame to Logan braes !

[Burns in one of his letters says, "I remember the two last lines of a verse in some of the old songs of Logan water, which I think pretty :—

"Now my dear lad maun face his faes,
 Far, far frae me and Logan braes."

These lines belong to the "Logan braes" of my friend John Mayne : the song was printed in the Star newspaper of May 23, 1789, and soon became a favorite, as it well might :—

"By Logan streams that rin sae deep,
 Fu' aft wi' glee I've herded sheep :

* Originally—

"Ye mind na' 'mid your cruel joys,
 The widow's tears, the orphan's cries."

I've herded sheep, or gathered slaes,
 Wi' my dear lad on Logan braes.
 But waes my heart thae days are gane,
 And fu' o' grief I herd my lane;
 While my dear lad maun face his faes,
 Far, far frae me and Logan braes.

"Nae mair at Logan kirk will he
 Atween the preachings meet wi' me—
 Meet wi' me, or when it's mirk,
 Convoy me hame frae Logan kirk.
 I weel may sing thae days are gane,
 Frae kirk and fair, I come my lane;
 While my dear lad maun face his faes,
 Far, far frae me and Logan braes."

The old verses to the same air, on which the modern songs are founded, will be given in the Poet's notes on Scottish song—they are curious.—ED.]

Do you know the following beautiful little fragment, in Witherspoon's collection of Scots songs?

Air—" *Hughie Graham.*"

"O gin my love were yon red rose,
 That grows upon the castle wa';
 And I mysel' a drap o' dew,
 Into her bonnie breast to fa'!

"Oh, there beyond expression blest,
 I'd feast on beauty a' the night;
 Seal'd on her silk-saft faulds to rest,
 Till fley'd awa by Phœbus' light."

This thought is inexpressibly beautiful; and quite, so far as I know, original. It is too short for a song, else I would forswear you altogether, unless you gave it a place. I have often tried to eke a stanza to it, but in vain. After balancing myself for a musing five minutes, on the hind-legs of my elbow-chair, I produced the following.

The verses are far inferior to the foregoing, I frankly confess; but if worthy of insertion at all, they might be first in place; as every poet, who knows any thing

of his trade, will husband his best thoughts for a concluding stroke.

O were my love yon lilac fair,
 Wi' purple blossoms to the spring;
 And I, a bird to shelter there,
 When wearied on my little wing!
 How I wad mourn, when it was torn
 By autumn wild, and winter rude!
 But I wad sing on wanton wing,
 When youthfu' May its bloom renewed.

[There are fragments of song of a nature so exquisitely fine, that, like the purest marble, they cannot be eked out or repaired without showing where the hand of the restorer has been. Burns, though eminently skilful, has not succeeded in writing a verse worthy of the one preserved by Witherspoon: his lines are beautiful: but lilacs are not favorites with birds: the odor of their blossoms is unpleasing to the musicians of the air, and they seldom build in them or seek them out as a shelter. Tradition has many verses, some tender, others ludicrous, which I have heard sung as additions to the old fragment:—

“O were my love yon pickle leeks,
 That's growing in the garden green;
 And I were but the gardener lad—
 I wad lie near the leeks at e'en.
 “O were my love yon fragrant gean,
 That hangs sae drap ripe on the tree;
 And I were but yon little bird—
 Far wi' that fragrant gean I'd flee.”—Ed.]

XXIV.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Monday, 1st July, 1793.

I AM extremely sorry, my good Sir, that any thing should happen to unhinge you. The times are terribly out of tune, and when harmony will be restored, Heaven knows.

The first book of songs, just published, will be despatched to you along with this. Let me be favored with your opinion of it, frankly and freely.

I shall certainly give a place to the song you have written for the "Quaker's Wife;" it is quite enchanting. Pray will you return the list of songs, with such airs added to it as you think ought to be included. The business now rests entirely on myself, the gentlemen who originally agreed to join the speculation, having requested to be off. No matter, a loser I cannot be. The superior excellence of the work will create a general demand for it, as soon as it is properly known. And, were the sale even slower than it promises to be, I should be somewhat compensated for my labor, by the pleasure I shall receive from the music. I cannot express how much I am obliged to you for the exquisite new songs you are sending me; but thanks, my friend, are a poor return for what you have done: as I shall be benefited by the publication, you must suffer me to enclose a small mark of my gratitude,* and to repeat it afterwards when I find it convenient. Do not return it, for, by Heaven! if you do, our correspondence is at an end: and though this would be no loss to you, it would mar the publication, which, under your auspices, cannot fail to be respectable and interesting.

Wednesday Morning.

I thank you for your delicate additional verses to the old fragment, and for your excellent song to "Logan Water:" Thomson's truly elegant one will follow for the English singer. Your apostrophe to statesmen is admirable, but I am not sure if it is quite suitable to the supposed gentle character of the fair mourner who speaks it.

[One of the gentlemen whom Thomson alludes to as partners in his speculation, was the Hon. Andrew Erskine: his health was declining, and desiring to free his mind from all the solicitude of either verse or music, he requested, as his partner says, to "be off." He did not long survive the separation.—ED.]

No. XXVII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

July 2nd, 1793.

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAVE just finished the following ballad, and, as I do think it in my best style, I send it you. Mr. Clarke, who wrote down the air from Mrs. Burns' wood-note wild, is very fond of it; and has given it a celebrity by teaching it to some young ladies of the first fashion here. If you do not like the air enough to give it a place in your collection, please return it. The song you may keep, as I remember it.

BONNIE JEAN.

I.

THERE was a lass, and she was fair,
At kirk and market to be seen,
When a' the fairest maids were met,
The fairest maid was bonnie Jean.

II.

And aye she wrought her mammie's wark,
And she sang sae merrilie:
The blithest bird upon the bush
Had ne'er a lighter heart than she.

III.

But hawks will rob the tender joys
That bless the little lintwhite's nest;
And frost will blight the fairest flowers,
And love will break the soundest rest.

IV.

Young Robie was the brawest lad,
The flower and pride of a' the glen;
And he had owsen, sheep, and kye,
And wanton naigies nine or ten.

V.

He gaed wi' Jeanie to the tryste,
He danc'd wi' Jeanie on the down;
And, lang ere witless Jeanie wist,
Her heart was tint, her peace was stown.

VI.

As in the bosom o' the stream,
The moon-beam dwells at dewy e'en;
So trembling, pure, was tender love
Within the breast o' bonnie Jean.*

VII.

And now she works her mammie's wark,
And ay she sighs wi' care and pain;
Yet wist na what her ail might be,
Or what wad mak her weel again.

VIII.

But did na Jeanie's heart loup light,
And did na joy blink in her e'e,
As Robie tauld a tale o' love
Ae e'enin' on the lily lea?

IX.

The sun was sinking in the west,
The birds sang sweet in ilka grove;
His cheek to hers he fondly prest,
And whisper'd thus his tale o' love:

* In the original MS. our Poet asks Mr. Thomson if this stanza is not original?

X.

O Jeanie fair, I lo'e thee dear ;
 O canst thou think to fancy me !
 Or wilt thou leave thy mammie's cot,
 And learn to tent the farms wi' me ?

XI.

At barn or byre thou shalt na drudge,
 Or naething else to trouble thee ;
 But stray amang the heather-bells,
 And tent the waving corn wi' me.

XII.

Now what could artless Jeanie do ?
 She had nae will to say him na :
 At length she blush'd a sweet consent,
 And love was ay between them twa.

I have some thoughts of inserting in your index, or in my notes, the names of the fair one, the themes of my songs. I do not mean the name at full ; but dashes or asterisms, so as ingenuity may find them out.

The heroine of the foregoing is Miss M., daughter to Mr. M., of D., one of your subscribers. I have not painted her in the rank which she holds in life, but in the dress and character of a cottager.

[Some of the finest of the songs of Burns were composed in honor of the charms of ladies of my native vale. Jean, the eldest daughter of John M'Murdo, Esq. of Drumlanrig, was the heroine of this exquisite song. The original, presented by the Poet to the family, lies before me : there are many variations, but they are of language rather than of sentiment. It wants the verse which Burns reckoned original :—

“ As i the bosom of the stream
 The moonbeain dwells at dewy e'en ;
 So trembling pure was tender love
 With n the breast o' bonnie Jean.”

The two first lines of the eleventh verse stand thus in the manuscript, and perhaps it would be as well to restore them :—

“Thy handsome foot thou shalt na set
In barn or byre to trouble thee.”

The homage paid to the graceful forms of the ladies of the M^cMurdo family merits notice, were it but to justify the Poet from a charge brought against him in Ayrshire, that his beauties were not other men's beauties. The o'erword of an old song seems to have been in his fancy when composing this lyric:—

“Learn to turn the maut wi' me,”

—it occurs oftener than once in the manuscript.—ED.]

NO XXVIII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

July, 1793.

I ASSURE you, my dear Sir, that you truly hurt me with your pecuniary parcel. It degrades me in my own eyes. However, to return it would savor of affectation; but, as to any more traffic of that debtor and creditor kind, I swear, by that HONOR which crowns the upright statue of ROBERT BURNS'S INTEGRITY—on the least motion of it, I will indignantly spurn the by-past transaction, and from that moment commence entire stranger to you! BURNS'S character for generosity of sentiment and independence of mind, will, I trust, long outlive any of his wants, which the cold unfeeling ore can supply: at least, I will take care that such a character he shall deserve.

Thank you for my copy of your publication. Never did my eyes behold in any musical work, such elegance and correctness. Your preface, too, is admirably written: only your partiality to me has made you say too much: however, it will bind me down to double every effort in the future progress of the work. The following are a few remarks on the songs in the list you sent me. I never copy what I write to you, so I may be often tautological or perhaps contradictory.

"The Flowers o' the Forest," is charming as a poem; and should be, and must be, set to the notes, but, though out of your rule, the three stanzas beginning,

"I hae seen the smiling o' fortune beguiling,"

are worthy of a place, were it but to immortalize the author of them, who is an old lady of my acquaintance, and at this moment living in Edinburgh. She is a Mrs. Cockburn; I forget of what place; but from Roxburghshire. What a charming apostrophe is

"O fickle fortune, why this cruel sporting,
Why, why torment us—poor sons of a day!"

The old ballad, "I wish I were where Helen lies," is silly, to contemptibility. My alteration of it, in Johnson's, is not much better. Mr. Pinkerton, in his, what he calls, ancient ballads (many of them notorious, though beautiful enough, forgeries) has the best set. It is full of his own interpolations,—but no matter.

In my next I will suggest to your consideration a few songs which may have escaped your hurried notice. In the mean time allow me to congratulate you now as a brother of the quill. You have committed your character and fame; which will now be tried, for ages to come, by the illustrious jury of the SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF TASTE—all whom poesy can please, or music charm.

Being a bard of nature, I have some pretensions to second sight; and I am warranted by the spirit to foretel and affirm, that your great-grandchild will hold up your volumes, and say with honest pride, "This so much-admired selection was the work of my ancestor!"

[Much has been said, and not a little written, concerning the refusal of Burns to receive a recompence in money for his labors: he had a right to do as he pleased, but certainly the la-

borer was worthy of his hire. Had he lived, he might have taken a lesson from Thomson in such matters.—“The publisher,” says that gentleman in his preface, “has an exclusive right to all the songs written purposely for his collections, as well as to all the symphonies and accompaniments. And as he did not obtain these without expending a large sum of money, without laborious researches, and unwearied exertions, and not until after a correspondence of twenty years with poets, musicians, and antiquaries, both at home and abroad, he feels it due to himself distinctly to announce, that if any person shall publish any of these songs, or any of the symphonies or accompaniments, he may depend upon being prosecuted for damages in terms of the Act of Parliament.” Nay, even from Burns himself, he obtained a document which might have opened the Poet’s eyes to the value of his own productions.—“I do hereby certify that all the songs of my writing, published and to be published by Mr. George Thomson of Edinburgh, are so published by my authority. And, moreover, that I never empowered any other person to publish any of the songs written by me for his work. And I authorize him to prosecute any person or persons who shall publish or vend any of those songs without his consent. (Signed) Robert Burns.”

The old ballad of “I wish I were where Helen lies,” for which the Poet expresses such contempt, is considered both beautiful and affecting. Currie seems to suppose that Burns was unacquainted with the genuine old strain, but the song which he altered for the Museum contains proof to the contrary: it is the ancient strain itself; any thing but improved by his alterations. Tradition readily supplies many versions—all are beautiful:—

“Curs’d be the heart that thought the thought,
And curs’d the hand that fired the shot,
Oh, in my arms burd Helen drop’t,
And died for sake o’ me.

“O think na but my heart was sair
When my love fell and spak nae mair;
I laid her down wi’ mickle care
On fair Kirkconnell lea.

“I laid her down, my sword did draw,
Stern was our strife in Kirtle-shaw—
I cutted him in pieces sma’
For her that died for me.”

Fair Helen of Kirkconnell belongs to the romantic songs of Scotland; other poets have taken up the story of the lovers, but the strains of the elder bard still triumph.—ED.]

No. XXIX.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, 1st Aug., 1793.

DEAR SIR,

I HAD the pleasure of receiving your last two letters, and am happy to find you are quite pleased with the appearance of the first book. When you come to hear the songs sung and accompanied, you will be charmed with them.

“The bonnie brucket Lassie” certainly deserves better verses, and I hope you will match her. “Cauld Kail in Aberdeen,” “Let me in this ae Night,” and several of the livelier airs, wait the muse’s leisure; these are peculiarly worthy of her choice gifts: besides, you’ll notice, that in airs of this sort, the singer can always do greater justice to the poet, than in the slower airs of “The bush aboon Traquair,” “Lord Gregory,” and the like; for in the manner the latter are frequently sung, you must be contented with the sound without the sense. Indeed, both the airs and words are disguised by the very slow, languid, psalm-singing style in which they are too often performed; they lose animation and expression altogether, and instead of speaking to the mind, or touching the heart, they cloy upon the ear, and set us a yawning!

Your ballad, “There was a Lass, and she was fair,” is simple and beautiful, and shall undoubtedly grace my collection.

No. XXX.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

MY DEAR THOMSON,

I HOLD the pen for our friend Clarke, who, at present, is studying the music of the spheres at my elbow. The "Georgium Sidus," he thinks, is rather out of tune ; so, until he rectify that matter, he cannot stoop to terrestrial affairs.

He sends you six of the Rondeau subjects, and if more are wanted he says you shall have them.

Confound your long stairs!

S. CLARKE.

[The writer of this old note was Stephen Clarke, teacher and composer of music ; who superintended the publication of the Musical Museum, and through Burns was introduced to several good families in Dumfries-shire. He had a high opinion of his own merit, and a humble opinion of the merit of most of his brethren. He spoke contemptuously of the musical powers of the laird of Friars-Carse ; though "The blue-eyed lass," as well as some other airs, might have saved him from the sarcasms of a brother composer.—ED.]

No. XXXI.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

YOUR objection, my dear Sir, to the passages in my song of "Logan Water," is right in one instance ; but it is difficult to mend it ; if I can I will. The other passage you object to does not appear in the same light to me.

I have tried my hand on "Robin Adair," and you will probably think, with little success ; but it is such a cursed, cramp, out-of-the-way measure, that I despair of doing any thing better to it.

PHILLIS THE FAIR.

Tune—"Robin Adair."

I.

WHILE larks with little wing
 Fann'd the pure air,
 Tasting the breathing spring,
 Forth I did fare :
 Gay the sun's golden eye
 Peep'd o'er the mountains high ;
 Such thy morn ! did I cry,
 Phillis the fair.

II.

In each bird's careless song,
 Glad, I did share ;
 While yon wild flowers among,
 Chance led me there :
 Sweet to the opening day,
 Rosebuds bent the dewy spray ;
 Such thy bloom ! did I say,
 Phillis the fair.

III.

Down in a shady walk
 Doves cooing were,
 I mark'd the cruel hawk
 Caught in a snare :
 So kind may fortune be,
 Such make his destiny !
 He who would injure thee,
 Phillis the fair.

So much for namby-pamby. I may, after all, try
 my hand on it in Scots verse. There I always find
 myself most at home.

I have just put the last hand to the song I meant for "Cauld kail in Aberdeen." If it suits you to insert it, I shall be pleased, as the heroine is a favorite of mine: if not I shall also be pleased; because I wish, and will be glad, to see you act decidedly on the business. 'Tis a tribute as a man of taste, and as an editor, which you owe yourself.

[One of our poets inspires his writing-desk with the power of speech,—makes it complain of being obliged to endure all the fulsome compliments which he pays to beauty,—the flattering dedications which he makes to wealth,—and humorously begs a remission from what is painful, because affected or unjust. Beauty is, in like manner, obliged to endure much at the hands of the wayward sons of song. It is, perhaps, not unfair for a poet to sing of his own sufferings: but a young lady has cause to complain, when a bard volunteers to embody in verse the imaginary woes of some fantastic person, and accuses her of inflicting visionary wounds on the fiddler to whose music she moves upon the floor, or on the musician who conducts her voice through a labyrinth of crotchets and quavers. Phillis M'Murdo is the heroine of this song: Burns wrote it at the request of Stephen Clarke, the musician, who believed himself in love with his "charming pupil."—ED.]

No. XXXII.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

August, 1793.

MY GOOD SIR,

I CONSIDER it one of the most agreeable circumstances attending this publication of mine, that it has procured me so many of your much valued epistles. Pray make my acknowledgments to St. Stephen for the tunes: tell him I admit the justness of his complaint on my staircase conveyed in his laconic postscript to your *jeu d'esprit*; which I perused more than once, without discovering exactly whether your

discussion was music, astronomy, or politics : though a sagacious friend, acquainted with the convivial habits of the poet and the musician, offered me a bet of two to one you were just drowning care together ; that an empty bowl was the only thing that would deeply affect you, and the only matter you could then study how to remedy !

I shall be glad to see you give "Robin Adair" a Scottish dress. Peter is furnishing him with an English suit for a change, and you are well matched together. Robin's air is excellent, though he certainly has an out-of-the-way measure as ever poor Parnassian wight was plagued with.—I wish you would invoke the muse for a single elegant stanza to be substituted for the concluding objectionable verses of "Down the Burn, Davie," so that this most exquisite song may no longer be excluded from good company.

Mr. Allan has made an inimitable drawing from your "John Anderson, my jo," which I am to have engraved as a frontispiece to the humorous class of songs ; you will be quite charmed with it, I promise you. The old couple are seated by the fireside. Mrs. Anderson, in great good humor, is clapping John's shoulders, while he smiles and looks at her with such glee, as to show that he fully recollects the pleasant days and nights when they were "first acquent." The drawing would do honor to the pencil of Teniers.

[The "Mrs. Anderson" on whom this praise is bestowed, is what the old ballad calls

"A carlin—a rig-widdie carlin,"

and seems fitter for a wife to him of Linkumoddie than to be spouse to cantie and douce John. She has the look of an ogress : her nose resembles a ramhorn, and the fingers which she is about to apply to her husband's lyart-locks are as hard as lobster-claws.—ED.]

No. XXXIII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

August, 1793

THAT crinkum-crankum tune, "Robin Adair," has run so in my head, and I succeeded so ill in my last attempt, that I have ventured, in this morning's walk, one essay more. You, my dear Sir, will remember an unfortunate part of our worthy friend Cunningham's story, which eappened about three years ago. That struck my fancy, and I endeavoured to do the idea justice, as follows:—

HAD I A CAVE.

Tune—"Robin Adair."

I.

Had I a cave on some wild, distant shore,
Where the winds howl to the waves' dashing roar;
There would I weep my woes,
There seek my lost repose,
Till grief my eyes should close,
Ne'er to wake more.

II.

Falsest of womankind, canst thou declare,
All thy fond plighted vows—fleeting as air!
To thy new lover hie,
Laugh o'er thy perjury,
Then in thy bosom try
What peace is there!

By the way, I have met with a musical Highlander, in Breadalbane's Fencibles, which are quartered here, who assures me that he well remembers his mother's singing Gaelic songs to both "Robin Adair" and "Gramachree." They certainly have more of the Scotch than Irish taste in them.

This man comes from the vicinity of Inverness ; so it could not be any intercourse with Ireland that could bring them ;—except, what I shrewdly suspect to be the case, the wandering minstrels, harpers, and pipers, used to go frequently errant through the wilds both of Scotland and Ireland, and so some favorite airs might be common to both. A case in point—They have lately, in Ireland, published an Irish air, as they say, called “Caun du delish.” The fact is, in a publication of Corri’s a great while ago, you will find the same air, called a Highland one, with a Gaelic song set to it. Its name there, I think, is “Oran Gaoil,” and a fine air it is. Do ask honest Allan, or the Rev. Gaelic Parson about these matters.

No. XXXIV.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

August, 1793

MY DEAR SIR,

“LET me in this ae night” I will reconsider. I am glad that you are pleased with my song, “Had I a cave,” &c. as I liked it myself.

I walked out yesterday evening, with a volume of the Museum in my hand : when turning up “Allan Water,” “What numbers shall the muse repeat,” &c. as the words appeared to me rather unworthy of so fine an air ; and, recollecting that it is on your list, I sat and raved under the shade of an old thorn, ’till I wrote one to suit the measure. I may be wrong ; but I think it not in my worst style. You must know, that in Ramsay’s “Tea Table,” where the modern song first appeared, the ancient name of the tune, Allan says, is “Allan Water ;” or, “My love Annie’s very bonnie.” This last has certainly been a line of

the original song ; so I took up the idea, and, as you will see, have introduced the line in its place which, I presume, it formerly occupied ; though I likewise give you a choosing line, if it should not hit the cut of your fancy :—

BY ALLAN STREAM.

I.

By Allan stream I chanced to rove
While Phœbus sank beyond Benledi ;
The winds were whispering through the grove,
The yellow corn was waving ready :
I listened to a lover's sang,
And thought on youthfu' pleasures mony ;
And aye the wild wood echoes rang—
O dearly do I lo'e thee, Annie !

II.

O happy be the woodbine bower,
Nae nightly bogle make it eerie ;
Nor ever sorrow stain the hour,
The place and time I met my dearie !
Her head upon my throbbing breast,
She, sinking, said " I'm thine for ever !"
While mony a kiss the seal imprest,
The sacred vow,—we ne'er should sever.

III.

The haunt o' spring's the primrose brae,
The simmer joys the flocks to follow ;
How cheery, thro' her shortening day,
Is Autumn, in her weeds o' yellow !
But can they melt the glowing heart,
Or chain the soul in speechless pleasure,
Or thro' each nerve the rapture dart,
Like meeting her, our bosom's treasure ?
Bravo ! say I : it is a good song. Should you think

so too (not else) you can set the music to it, and let the other follow as English verses.

Autumn is my propitious season. I make more verses in it than all the year else.

God bless you!

[The fancy of Burns took a flight northwards in conceiving this song. Benledi is a mountain westward of Strathallan, some three thousand feet high, and Allan Water gives its name to the strath. The Poet might have found all that he wanted in his immediate neighbourhood: Criffel or Queensberry rises loftily enough, and Annan Water is sufficiently pure for all the purposes of song: moreover, the old lyric from which he took the idea belongs to the district:—

“O Annan Water’s wide and deep,
And my love Annie’s wondrous bonnie;
Shall I be laith to weet my feet
For her whom I love best of onie?
Gar saddle me my bonnie black,
Gar saddle soon and make him ready,
For I will down the Gatehope-slack
And a’ to see my bonnie lady.”

Another ancient strain has a similarity of thought and language—the lover seems to be a cautious person:—

“O Annan Water’s wading deep,
Yet I am loth to weet my feet;
But if ye’ll consent to marry me
I’ll hire a horse to carry thee.”

The Annan is a beautiful river, with alternate pool and stream, and liable, like all mountain waters, to sudden floods. Burns was often on its banks; amongst its woods he sought for smugglers, or wooed the muses, as circumstances required.—ED.]

No. XXXV.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

Is “Whistle, and I’ll come to you, my lad,” one of your airs? I admire it much; and yesterday I set the

following verses to it. Urbani, whom I have met with here, begged them of me, as he admires the air much; but, as I understand that he looks with rather an evil eye on your work, I did not choose to comply. However if the song does not suit your taste, I may possibly send it him. The set of the air which I had in my eye is in Johnson's Museum.

O WHISTLE, AND I'LL COME TO YOU.

I.

O WHISTLE, and I'll come to you, my lad,
 O whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad:
 Tho' father and mither and a' should gae mad,
 O whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad.
 But warily tent, when you come to court me,
 And come na unless the back-yett be a-jee;
 Syne up the back-stile and let naebody see,
 And come as ye were na comin' to me,
 And come as ye were na comin' to me.

II.

At kirk, or at market, whene'er ye meet me,
 Gang by me as tho' that ye car'd na a flie;
 But steal me a blink o' your bonnie black e'e,
 Yet look as ye were na lookin' at me,
 Yet look as ye were na lookin' at me.

III

Ay vow and protest that ye care na for me,
 And whyles ye may lightly my beauty a wee;
 But court na anither, tho' jokin' ye be,
 For fear that she wyle your fancy frae me,
 For fear that she wyle your fancy frae me.
 O whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad,
 O whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad:
 Tho' father and mither and a' should gae mad,
 O whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad.

Another favorite air of mine, is, "The muckin' o' Geordie's byre." When sung slow with expression, I have wished that it had had better poetry: that, I have endeavoured to supply, as follows:—

ADOWN WINDING NITH.

I.

ADOWN winding Nith I did wander,
 To mark the sweet flowers as they spring;
 Adown winding Nith I did wander,
 Of Phillis to muse and to sing.
 Awa wi' your belles and your beauties,
 They never wi' her can compare:
 Whaeveer has met wi' my Phillis
 Has met wi' the queen o' the fair.

II.

The daisy amus'd my fond fancy,
 So artless, so simple, so wild;
 Thou emblem, said I, o' my Phillis,
 For she is simplicity's child.

III.

The rose-bud's the blush o' my charmer,
 Her sweet balmy lip when 'tis prest:
 How fair and how pure is the lily,
 But fairer and purer her breast.

IV.

Yon knot of gay flowers in the arbor,
 They ne'er wi' my Phillis can vie:
 Her breath is the breath o' the woodbine,
 Its dew-drop o' diamond, her eye.

V.

Her voice is the song of the morning,
 That wakes tho' the green-spreading grove,
 When Phœbus peeps over the mountains,
 On music, and pleasure, and love.

VI.

But beauty how frail and how fleeting,
 The bloom of a fine summer's day!
 While worth in the mind o' my Phillis
 Will flourish without a decay.

Awa wi' your bells and your beauties,
 They never wi' her can compare :
 Whaeveer has met wi' my Phillis
 Has met wi' the queen o' the fair.

Mr. Clarke begs you to give Miss Phillis a corner in your book, as she is a particular flame of his. She is a Miss P. M., sister to "Bonnie Jean." They are both pupils of his. You shall hear from me, the very first grist I get from my rhyming-mill.

[The first of these songs, "Whistle, and I'll come to thee, my lad," is founded on some old lines to the same air, which the Poet has wrought into the first verse. The early strain was once popular in Nithsdale: it had several variations, nor is that of Burns without them:—

"O whistle, and I'll come to thee, my jo,
 O whistle, and I'll come to thee, my jo :
 Though father and mother and a' should say no,
 O whistle, and I'll come to thee, my jo."

From one of the variations it appears that the name of the heroine was Jeanie:—

"Though father and mother and a' should gae mad,
 Thy Jeanie will venture wi' thee, my lad."

Who the lady was, no one has told us: Jeanies abounded in the district: some of them were eminently beautiful; yet none, save one, was likely to countenance a lover who made his appearance under the cloud of night and courted concealment.

The other song, "Adown winding Nith I did wander," is not indebted to old verses for either its sentiments or its character. The young lady who inspired it was Phillis M. Murdo, afterwards Mrs. Norman Lockhart of Carnwath. "This song," says Currie, "though certainly beautiful, would appear to more advantage without the chorus, as is indeed the case with several other songs of our author." The chorus seems no encum-

brance in this instance : it maintains the leading sentiment, and, in singing, enables the other voices to take a share, and give additional emphasis to the praise bestowed on this Nithsdale beauty. The former editors of Burns seem to have disliked choruses greatly : they are sometimes omitted, though the song cannot be sung without them. It is true that the chorus seldom carries on the story : but then that is not its object : it enables the company to take a share in the entertainment, and no one need be told with what effect two or three well-tuned voices take up the o'erword, at the end of each verse.—ED.]

No. XXXVI.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

THAT tune, "Cauld Kail," is such a favorite of yours, that I once more roved out yesterday for a gloamin-shot at the muses ;* when the muse that presides o'er the shores of Nith, or rather my old inspiring dearest nymph, Coila, whispered me the following. I have two reasons for thinking that it was my early, sweet, simple inspirer that was by my elbow, "smooth gliding without step," and pouring the song on my glowing fancy. In the first place, since I left Coila's native haunts, not a fragment of a poet has arisen to cheer her solitary musings, by catching inspiration from her ; so I more than suspect that she has followed me hither, or at least makes me occasional visits : secondly, the last stanza of this song I send you is the very words that Coila taught me many years ago, and which I set to an old Scots reel in Johnson's Museum.

[Gloamin—twilight. A beautiful poetic word which ought to be adopted in England. A gloamin-shot, a twilight interview—CURRIE.]

COME, LET ME TAKE THEE.

Tune—" *Could Kail.* "

I.

COME, let me take thee to my breast,
And pledge we ne'er shall sunder ;
And I shall spurn as vilest dust
The world's wealth and grandeur :
And do I hear my Jeanie own
That equal transports move her ?
I ask for dearest life alone,
That I may live to love her.

II.

Thus in my arms, wi' a' thy charms,
I clasp my countless treasure ;
I'll seek nae mair o' heaven to share,
Than sic a moment's pleasure :
And by thy een, sae bonnie blue,
I swear I'm thine for ever !
And on thy lips I seal my vow,
And break it shall I never.

If you think the above will suit your idea of your favorite air, I shall be highly pleased. "The last time I came o'er the moor" I cannot meddle with as to mending it ; and the musical world have been so long accustomed to Ramsay's words, that a different song, though positively superior, would not be so well received. I am not fond of choruses to songs, so I have not made one for the foregoing.

[The voice of tradition may often be listened to, yet not in all things trusted : the legends of the Vale of Nith say that the heroine of "Come let me take thee to my heart," was Jean Lorimer ; but this wants confirmation. Burns was so much under the influence of beauty that he is never supposed to sing without some living fair one in his mind ; and, as the "Lass of Crai-

gieburn" was far from coy, popular belief has seated her beside the Poet, and inspired him with her blue eyes, and rosy lips. Be this as it may, it is quite evident that nothing is borrowed from the old words of the air, to which the song is adapted. "Cauld kail in Aberdeen, and castocks in Strabogie," have no connexion with the ecstasy of such lines as these:—

"Thus in my arms, wi' a' thy charms,
I clasp my countless treasure;
I'll seek nae mair o' heaven to share
Than sic a moment's pleasure."—ED.]

No. XXXVII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

DAINTY DAVIE.

I.

Now rosy May comes in wi' flowers,
To deck her gay, green-spreading bowers;
And now comes in my happy hours,
To wander wi' my Davie.

Meet me on the warlock knowe,
Dainty Davie, dainty Davie,
There I'll spend the day wi' you,
My ain dear dainty Davie.

II.

The crystal waters round us fa',
The merry birds are lovers a',
The scented breezes round us blaw,
A wandering wi' my Davie.

III.

When purple morning starts the hare,
To steal upon her early fare,
Then thro' the dews I will repair,
To meet my faithfu' Davie.

IV.

When day, expiring in the west,
The curtain draws o' nature's rest,
I flee to his arms I lo'e best,

And that's my ain dear Davie.

Meet me on the warlock knowe,

Bonnie Davie, dainty Davie,

There I'll spend the day wi' you,

My ain dear dainty Davie.

So much for Davie. The chorus, you know, is to the low part of the tune.—See Clarke's set of it in the Museum.

N. B. In the Museum they have drawled out the tune to twelve lines of poetry, which is cursed nonsense. Four lines of song, and four of chorus, is the way.

[The reader will find an earlier song to this air in Vol. II. page 316. The Poet has added a very happy chorus, and made some alterations, they are curious—as showing the care with which he sometimes revised compositions from which he hoped for fame.—“Dainty Davie” is the name of an old merry song, from which Burns has borrowed nothing save the title and the measure. It relates the adventure of David Williamson, a preacher of the days of the Covenant: he was pursued by Dalzell's dragoons, and seeking refuge in the house of Cherrytrees, the devout lady put the man of God into a bed beside her daughter to hide him from the men of Belial: the return which the reverend gentleman made for this is set forth very graphically in the old verses. The young lady sings—

“Being pursued by a dragoon,

Within my bed he was laid down,

And weel I wat he was worth his room—

My douce, my dainty Davie.”

The lady of Cherrytrees is not the only example of strong faith in the fair sex. Sir Robert Strange, the eminent engraver, fled in his youth from a field of battle, where he had fought in vain for his native princes, and being hotly pursued, sought refuge in a gentleman's house, where a lady—beautiful and young—concealed him under her hooped-petticoat. When days of

peace came and fortune smiled, the grateful rebel wooed his protectoress and made her his wife: she was equally witty and lovely, and figured among the fashionables of London till the death of her husband.

The Nithsdale lady went to no such extremities in her affection—her name has not transpired—the name of one who had courage to keep a tryste on the “Warlock knowe,” is worthy of remembrance.—ED.]

No. XXXVIII.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, 1st Sept. 1793.

MY DEAR SIR,

SINCE writing you last I have received half a dozen songs, with which I am delighted beyond expression. The humor and fancy of “Whistle, and I’ll come to you, my lad,” will render it nearly as great a favorite as “Duncan Gray.” “Come, let me take thee to my breast,”—“Adown winding Nith,” and “By Allan stream,” &c., are full of imagination and feeling and sweetly suit the airs for which they are intended.—“Had I a cave on some wild distant shore” is a striking and affecting composition. Our friend, to whose story it refers, read it with a swelling heart, I assure you. The union we are now forming, I think, can never be broken: these songs of yours will descend with the music to the latest posterity, and will be fondly cherished so long as genius, taste, and sensibility exist in our island.

While the muse seems so propitious, I think it right to enclose a list of all the favors I have to ask of her—no fewer than twenty and three! I have burdened the pleasant Peter with as many as it is probable he will attend to: most of the remaining airs would puzzle the English poet not a little; they are of that peculiar measure and rhythm, that they must be familiar to him who writes for them.

[Thomson at first spoke of twenty or five and twenty songs : at the time when he wrote this letter he had received seven and twenty, yet he requests three and twenty more because the muse was propitious and the Poet enthusiastic ! It will be seen that the list was not limited to this number. When Burns refused money, it was for the songs which he had undertaken to supply : there is no word of any recompence for the new batch of lyrics.—ED.]

No. XXXIX.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

Sept. 1793.

You may readily trust, my dear Sir, that any exertion in my power is heartily at your service. But one thing I must hint to you ; the very name of Peter Pindar is of great service to your publication, so get a verse from him now and then : though I have no objection, as well as I can, to bear the burden of the business.

You know that my pretensions to musical taste are merely a few of nature's instincts, untaught and untutored by art. For this reason, many musical compositions, particularly where much of the merit lies in counterpoint, however they may transport and ravish the ears of you connoisseurs, affect my simple lug no otherwise than merely as melodious din. On the other hand, by way of amends, I am delighted with many little melodies, which the learned musician despises as silly and insipid. I do not know whether the old air "Hey, tuttie taitie," may rank among this number ; but well I know that, with Fraser's hautboy, it has often filled my eyes with tears. There is a tradition, which I have met with in many places of Scotland, that it was Robert Bruce's march at the battle of Bannockburn. This thought, in my solitary

wanderings, warmed me to a pitch of enthusiasm on the theme of liberty and independence, which I threw into a kind of Scottish ode, fitted to the air, that one might suppose to be the gallant Royal Scot's address to his heroic followers on that eventful morning.

BRUCE TO HIS MEN AT BANNOCKBURN.

Tune—"Hey, tuttie, taitie."

I.

Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled,
Scots, wham Bruce has aften led;
Welcome to your gory bed,
Or to victorie!

II.

Now's the day and now's the hour;
See the front o' battle lour:
See approach proud Edward's pow'r—
Chains and slaverie!

III.

Wha will be a traitor-knave?
Wha can fill a coward's grave?
Wha sae base as be a slave?
Let him turn and flee!

IV.

Wha for Scotland's king and law
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
Freeman stand or freeman fa'?
Let him follow me!

V.

By oppression's woes and pains!
By our sons in servile chains!
We will drain our dearest veins,
But they shall be free!

VI.

Lay the proud usurpers low !

Tyrants fall in every foe !

Liberty's in every blow !—

Let us do or die !

So may God ever defend the cause of truth and liberty, as he did that day !—Amen.

P. S. I showed the air to Urbani, who was highly pleased with it, and begged me to make soft verses for it, but I had no idea of giving myself any trouble on the subject, till the accidental recollection of that glorious struggle for freedom, associated with the glowing ideas of some other struggles of the same nature, not quite so ancient, roused my rhyming mania. Clarke's set of the tune, with his bass, you will find in the Museum ; though I am afraid that the air is not what will entitle it to a place in your elegant selection.

[It is related by Syme of Ryedale, that Burns composed this noble song under the influence of a storm of rain and lightning among the wilds of Glenken in Galloway. When "the rain and the whirlwind came abroad," the Poet regarded them not : he neither drew his hat over his brow, nor urged his pony onward, but seemed lost in thought. The fruit of this silence was the "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled ;" an extraordinary song produced in an extraordinary manner. His own account of its composition has nothing of the romantic in it : yet even the poetic description of Syme cannot be considered so interesting as the following letter containing Burns' own opinion of this favorite war song.—"I am indebted," says my friend, Robert Chambers, "to Mr. Stewart of Dalguise, for this very interesting document addressed to an officer of a fencible regiment, and dated Dumfries, 5th December, 1793 : it is, perhaps, one of the most characteristic letters Burns ever wrote :—

"Sir,—Heated as I was with wine yesternight, I was perhaps, rather seemingly impertinent in my anxious wish to be honored with your acquaintance. You will forgive it—it was the impulse of heartfelt respect. 'He is the father of the Scotch County Reform, and is a man who does honor to the business,

at the same time that the business does honor to him,' said my worthy friend Glenriddell to somebody by me who was talking of your coming to this country with your corps. Then I replied I have a woman's longing to take him by the hand and say to him—' Sir, I honor you as a man to whom the interests of humanity are dear, and as a patriot to whom the rights of your country are sacred.'

"In times like these, Sir, when our commoners are barely able by the glimmer of their own twilight-understandings to scrawl a frank, and when lords are what gentlemen would be ashamed to be, to whom shall a sinking country call for help? To the independent country gentleman! To him who has too deep a stake in his country not to be in earnest for her welfare: and who in the honest pride of man can view with equal contempt the insolence of office and the allurements of corruption.

"I mentioned to you a Scots ode, or song, I had lately composed, and which, I think, has some merit. Allow me to enclose it. When I fall in with you at the theatre, I shall be glad to have your opinion of it. Accept it, Sir, as a very humble, but most sincere tribute of respect from a man who, dear as he prizes poetic fame, yet holds dearer an independent mind. I have the honor to be, &c. ROBERT BURNS."

Something of the spirit of this far-famed song is visible in the memoranda, made by Burns on visiting the field of battle in August, 1787.—"Dine at Auchenbowie: Mr. Monro an excellent worthy old man; Miss Monro, an amiable, sensible, sweet young woman. Come on to Bannockburn. Shown the old house where James III. finished so tragically his unfortunate life. The field of Bannockburn: the hole in the stone where glorious Bruce set his standard. Here no Scot can pass uninterested. I fancy to myself that I see my gallant heroic countrymen coming o'er the hill and down upon the plunderers of their country and the murderers of their fathers: noble revenge and just hate glowing in every vein, striding more and more eagerly as they approach the oppressive, insulting, blood-thirsty foe! I see them meet in gloriously-triumphant congratulation on the victorious field, exulting in their heroic leader, and rescued liberty and independence!" After the prose of this passage the poetry of the ode might be expected.—ED.]

No. XL.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

Sept. 1793.

I DARE say, my dear Sir, that you will begin to think my correspondence is persecution. No matter, I can't help it; a ballad is my hobby-horse, which, though otherwise a simple sort of harmless idiotical beast enough, has yet this blessed head-strong property, that when once it has fairly made off with a hapless wight, it gets so enamoured with the tinkle-gingle, tingle-gingle of its own bells, that it is sure to run poor pilgarlick, the bedlam jockey, quite beyond any useful point or post in the common race of man.

The following song I have composed for "*Oran-gaoil*," the Highland air that, you tell me in your last, you have resolved to give a place to in your book. I have this moment finished the song, so you have it glowing from the mint. If it suit you, well!—If not, 'tis also well!

BEHOLD THE HOUR.

Tune—"Oran-gaoil."

I.

BEHOLD the hour, the boat arrive;
 Thou goest, thou darling of my heart!
 Severed from thee can I survive?
 But fate has will'd, and we must part.
 I'll often greet this surging swell,
 Yon distant isle will often hail:
 "E'en here I took the last farewell;
 There, latest mark'd her vanish'd sail."

II.

Along the solitary shore
 While flitting sea-fowl round me cry,
 Across the rolling, dashing roar,
 I'll westward turn my wistful eye :
 Happy, thou Indian grove, I'll say,
 Where now my Nancy's path may be !
 While thro' thy sweets she loves to stray,
 O tell me, does she muse on me ?

[The inspirer of this song is said to have been Clarinda : she meditated, it seems a voyage to a certain Western isle, and the Poet has imagined the last farewell taken, and the parting looks interchanged. Some of his most impassioned lyrics were composed in honor of this accomplished lady.—Ed.]

No. XLI.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, 5th Sept. 1793.

I BELIEVE it is generally allowed that the greatest modesty is the sure attendant of the greatest merit. While you are sending me verses that even Shakspeare might be proud to own, you speak of them as if they were ordinary productions ! Your heroic ode is, to me, the noblest composition of the kind in the Scottish language. I happened to dine yesterday with a party of your friends, to whom I read it. They were all charmed with it, entreated me to find out a suitable air for it, and reprobated the idea of giving it a tune so totally devoid of interest or grandeur as "Hey, tuttie taitie." Assuredly your partiality for this tune must arise from the ideas associated in your mind by the tradition concerning it ; for I never heard any person, and I have conversed again and again with the greatest enthusiasts for Scottish airs—I say, I never heard any one speak of it as worthy of notice.

I have been running over the whole hundred airs of which I lately sent you the list, and I think "Lewie Gordon" is most happily adapted to your ode ; at least with a very slight variation of the fourth line, which I shall presently submit to you. There is in "Lewie Gordon" more of the grand than the plaintive, particularly when it is sung with a degree of spirit which your words would oblige the singer to give it. I would have no scruple about substituting your ode in the room of "Lewie Gordon," which has neither the interest, the grandeur, nor the poetry that characterize your verses. Now the variation I have to suggest upon the last line of each verse—the only line too short for the air—is as follows:—

Verse 1st, Or to "glorious" victorie.

2nd, "Chains"—chains and slaverie.

3rd, Let him, "let him" turn and flee.

4th, Let him "bravely" follow me.

5th, But "they shall," they shall be free.

6th, Let us, "let us" do or die!

If you connect each line with its own verse, I do not think you will find that either the sentiment or the expression loses any of its energy. The only line which I dislike in the whole of the song is, "Welcome to your gory bed." Would not another word be preferable to "welcome?" In your next I will expect to be informed whether you agree to what I have proposed. The little alterations I submit with the greatest deference.

The beauty of the verses you have made for "Oran-gaoil" will ensure celebrity to the air.

[The simple energy of this noble war-ode is weakened greatly by lengthening the fourth line of each verse to suit the air of "Lewie Gordon." These changes are now generally rejected both by the reader and singer. The appearance of

the Scottish army on that eventful day is well described by a native Master in the art of song :—

“ Responsive from the Scottish host,
Pipe clang and bugle sound were toss’d,
His breast and brow each soldier cross’d,
And started from the ground :
Arm’d and array’d for instant fight,
Rose archer, spearman, squire and knight
And in the pomp of battle bright,
The dread battalia frown’d.”

A far inferior hand supplies us with the appearance of Edward’s army nigh the close of the strife :—

“ Weep all ye English maidens—
Lo Bannock-brook’s in flood,
Not with its own sweet waters,
But England’s noblest blood :
For see your arrow show’r has ceas’d,
The thrilling bow-string’s mute ;
And where rides fiery Gloster ?
All trodden under foot.
Wail all ye dames of England—
No more shall Musgrave know
The sound of the shrill trumpet—
And Argentine is low.”—ED.]

No. XLII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

September, 1793.

I HAVE received your list, my dear Sir, and here go my observations on it.*

“ Down the burn, Davie.” I have this moment tried an alteration, leaving out the last half of the third stanza, and the first half of the last stanza, thus :—

* Mr. Thomson’s list of songs for his publication. In his remarks, the Bard proceeds in order, and goes through the whole ; but on many of them he merely signifies his approbation. All his remarks of any importance are presented to the reader.—CURRIE.

As down the burn they took their way,
And thro' the flowery dale ;
His cheek to hers he aft did lay,
And love was ay the tale.

With " Mary, when shall we return,
Sic pleasure to renew ?"
Quoth Mary, " Love, I like the burn,
And ay shall follow you."

" Thro' the wood, laddie"—I am decidedly of opinion, that both in this, and " There'll never be Peace till Jamie comes hame," the second or high part of the tune being a repetition of the first part an octave higher, is only for instrumental music, and would be much better omitted in singing.

" Cowden-knowes." Remember in your index, that the song in pure English to this tune, beginning,

" When summer comes, the swains on Tweed,"

is the production of Crawford. Robert was his Christian name.

" Laddie, lie near me," must lie by me for some time. I do not know the air ; and, until I am complete master of a tune, in my own singing (such as it is), I can never compose for it. My way is : I consider the poetic sentiment correspondent to my idea of the musical expression ; then choose my theme ; begin one stanza—when that is composed, which is generally the most difficult part of the business, I walk out, sit down now and then, look out for objects in nature round me, that are in unison or harmony with the cogitations of my fancy, and workings of my bosom ; humming every now and then the air, with the verses I have framed. When I feel my muse beginning to jade, I retire to the solitary fire-side of my study, and there commit my effusions to paper ; swinging, at intervals, on the hind-legs of my elbow-chair, by way of

calling forth my own critical strictures, as my pen goes on. Seriously, this, at home, is almost invariably my way.

What cursed egotism!

“Gil Morice” I am for leaving out. It is a plaguy length; the air itself is never sung, and its place can be well supplied by one or two songs for fine airs that are not in your list. For instance, “Craigieburn wood,” and “Roy’s Wife.” The first, beside its intrinsic merit, has novelty; and the last has high merit as well as great celebrity. I have the original words of a song for the last air, in the hand-writing of the lady who composed it: and they are superior to any edition of the song which the public has yet seen.

“Highland laddie.” The old set will please a mere Scotch ear best; and the new an Italianized one. There is a third, and what Oswald calls, the old “Highland laddie,” which please me more than either of them. It is sometimes called “Jinglan Johnnie;” it being the air of an old humorous tawdry song of that name. You will find it in the Museum, “I hae been at Crookieden,” &c. I would advise you, in this musical quandary, to offer up your prayers to the muses for inspiring direction; and, in the mean time, waiting for this direction, bestow a libation to Bacchus; and there is no doubt but you will hit on a judicious choice. *Probatum est.*

“Auld Sir Simon,” I must beg you to leave out, and put in its place, “The Quaker’s Wife.”

“Blythe hae I been o’er the hill,” is one of the finest songs I ever made in my life; and, besides, is composed on a young lady, positively the most beautiful, lovely woman in the world. As I purpose giving you the names and designations of all my heroines, to appear in some future edition of your work, perhaps half a century hence, you must certainly include “The bonniest lass in a’ the world” in your collection.

“Dainty Davie,” I have heard sung, nineteen thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine times, and always with the chorus to the low part of the tune ; and nothing has surprised me so much as your opinion on this subject. If it will not suit, as I proposed, we will lay two of the stanzas together, and then make the chorus follow.

“Fee him, Father”—I enclose you Fraser’s set of this tune when he plays it slow : in fact he makes it the language of despair. I shall here give you two stanzas in that style ; merely to try if it will be any improvement. Were it possible, in singing, to give it half the pathos which Fraser gives it in playing, it would make an admirably pathetic song. I do not give these verses for any merit they have. I composed them at the time in which “Patie Allan’s Mither died, that was about the back o’ midnight ;” and by the lee-side of a bowl of punch, which had overset every mortal in company, except the hautbois and the muse.

THOU HAST LEFT ME EVER.

Tune—“*Fee him, Father.*”

I.

THOU hast left me ever, Jamie !

Thou hast left me ever ;

Thou hast left me ever, Jamie !

Thou hast left me ever.

Aften hast thou vow’d that death

Only should us sever ;

Now thou’s left thy lass for ay—

I maun see thee never, Jamie,

I’ll see thee never !

II.

Thou hast me forsaken, Jamie !

Thou hast me forsaken ;

Thou hast me forsaken, Jamie !

Thou hast me forsaken.

Thou canst love anither jo,

While my heart is breaking :

Soon my weary een I'll close,

Never mair to waken, Jamie,

Ne'er mair to waken !

[The Poet left these exquisite verses unfinished : it was his intention to have added another stanza, but he either forgot or failed to find the muse in a suitable mood. Though a fragment, the song, when sung with proper feeling, never fails to make a deep impression. "The Scotch," says Currie, "employ the abbreviation 'I'll' for 'I shall,' as well as 'I will,' and it is for 'I shall' it is used in this song. In Annandale, as in the northern counties of England, for 'I shall' they use 'I'se.'" A shepherd maiden of that district met her lover at a Lockerby fair, and reproached him in these words, "How can ye be sae ramgunshoch to me, when I'se sae kircudjech to yow ? Those who are conversant in the origin of language perceive the rudeness of the hind and the kindness of the maiden in these strange words.—ED.]

"Jockey and Jenny" I would discard, and in its place would put "There's nae luck about the house," which has a very pleasant air ; and which is positively the finest love-ballad in that style in the Scottish, or perhaps in any other language. "When she came ben she bobbet," as an air, is more beautiful than either, and in the andante way would unite with a charming sentimental ballad.

"Saw ye my Father ?" is one of my greatest favorites. The evening before last I wandered out, and began a tender song, in what I think is its native style. I must premise that the old way, and the way to give most effect, is to have no starting note, as the fiddlers call it, but to burst at once into the pathos. Every country girl sings—"Saw ye my Father ?" &c.

My song is but just begun ; and I should like, be-

fore I proceed, to know your opinion of it. I have sprinkled it with the Scottish dialect, but it may be easily turned into correct English.*

“Todlin hame.” Urbani mentioned an idea of his, which has long been mine—that this air is highly susceptible of pathos: accordingly, you will soon hear him at your concert try it to a song of mine in the Museum—“Ye banks and braes o’ bonnie Doon.” One song more and I have done—“Auld lang syne.” The air is but mediocre; but the following song, the old song of the olden times, and which has never been in print, nor even in manuscript, until I took it down from an old man’s singing, is enough to recommend any air:—

AULD LANG SYNE.

I.

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to min’?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And days o’ lang syne?
For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne,
We’ll tak a cup o’ kindness yet,
For auld lang syne!

II.

We twa hae run about the braes,
And pu’t the gowans fine;
But we’ve wandered mony a weary foot,
Sin auld lang syne.

III.

We twa hae paidl’t i’ the burn,
Frae mornin’ sun till dine:
But seas between us braid hae roar’d,
Sin auld lang syne.

* This song begins,

“Where are the joys I hae met in the morning.”

IV.

And here's a hand, my trusty fiere,
And gie's a hand o' thine ;
And we'll tak a right guid willie-waught,
For auld lang syne !

V.

And surely ye'll be your pint-stowp,
And surely I'll be mine ;
And we'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne.
For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne,
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne !

Now, I suppose, I have tired your patience fairly. You must, after all is over, have a number of ballads, properly so called. "Gil Morice," "Tranent Muir," "Macpherson's Farewell," "Battle of Sheriff Muir," or, "We ran and they ran" (I know the author of this charming ballad, and his history,) "Hardiknute," "Barbara Allan" (I can furnish a finer set of this tune than any that has yet appeared); and besides do you know that I really have the old tune to which "The Cherry and the Slae" was sung; and which is mentioned as a well-known air in "Scotland's Complaint," a book published before poor Mary's days. It was then called "The banks o' Helicon;" an old poem which Pinkerton has brought to light. You will see all this in Tytler's History of Scottish Music. The tune, to a learned ear, may have no great merit; but it is a great curiosity. I have a good many original things of this kind.

["Auld Lang Syne" is one of those lyrics which owes its conception to the olden muse, and all the beauty of its language and sentiment to the modern. Burns introduced it to Thomson as an effort of an old minstrel, and he wrote thus to Mrs. Dunlop:—"Light be the turf on the breast of the heaven-inspired poet who composed this glorious fragment!" In this sentiment millions will concur. To inquire how much of the song is old is to go into the regions of conjecture; for my own part, I have no hesitation in assigning the second, third, and fourth verses to Burns. As he professed to have taken it down from the lips of an old man—one of those old men whom true poets alone can meet with—we need not seek for the original in our collections. The "Auld Lang Syne" of Ramsay's *Miscellany* helps us a line or so:—

"Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
Though they return wi' scars;
These are the noble hero's lot,
Obtained in glorious wars."

That Ramsay rejected such a song as the modern "Auld Lang Syne," no one but a resolute antiquarian would assert. I am inclined to think that Allan left few old songs out of his collection, save those that were so wild as to daunt even the people of an age who loved intrepid simplicity of language."—ED.]

No. XLIII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

September, 1793.

I AM happy, my dear Sir, that my ode pleases you so much. Your idea, "honor's bed," is, though a beautiful, a hackneyed idea; so if you please, we will let the line stand as it is. I have altered the song as follows:—

BANNOCKBURN.

ROBERT BRUCE'S ADDRESS TO HIS ARMY.

I.

Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled;
Scots, wham Bruce has aften led;
Welcome to your gory bed,
Or to glorious victorie!

II.

Now's the day, and now's the hour—
 See the front o' battle lower ;
 See approach proud Edward's power—
 Edward ! chains and slaverie !

III.

Wha will be a traitor-knave ?
 Wha can fill a coward's grave ?
 Wha sae base as be a slave ?
 Traitor ! coward ! turn and flee ?

IV.

Wha for Scotland's king and law
 Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
 Freeman stand, or freeman fa',
 Caledonian ! on wi' me !

V.

By oppression's woes and pains !
 By our sons in servile chains !
 We will drain our dearest veins,
 But they shall be—shall be free !

VI.

Lay the proud usurpers low !
 Tyrants fall in every foe !
 Liberty's in every blow !
 Forward ! let us do, or die !

N. B.—I have borrowed the last stanza from the common stall edition of Wallace :—

“ A false usurper sinks in every foe,
 And liberty returns with every blow.”

A couplet worthy of Homer. Yesterday you had enough of my correspondence. The post goes, and my head aches miserably. One comfort—I suffer so much, just now, in this world, for last night's joviality, that I shall escape scot-free for it in the world to come. Amen!

[The field on which this memorable battle was fought is annually visited by English tourists, and they seldom leave it without carrying away something to remind them of the spot. Some even invaded the sanctity of the "Bore-stone," in which the standard of Bruce was placed, and carried bits with them as specimens. Those who reflect rightly on the upshot of the contest, feel that in the triumph of freeborn men the great cause of liberty triumphed: no historian, save one with a contracted heart—nor no enlightened statesman, can regard the struggles of Scotland with other feelings than those of sympathy. Few Scotsmen can pass the porphyry tomb of Edward the First in Westminster Abbey, without a certain mounting of the blood; or look upon the "old black stone of Scone" without recollecting how it came there. These are not narrow-souled nationalities.

The memorable "Scotch stone" is any thing but black; it is a rough-piled reddish-gray sandstone, such as may be found on the Solway side at Arbigland: it is six and twenty inches long, sixteen inches wide, and eleven inches thick, and is fixed in the bottom of the chair with cramps of iron. The stone is unquestionably Scottish: troughs, crosses, and other ancient matters at present to be found in the north, seem from the same quarry. —ED.]

No. XLIV.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

12th Sept. 1793.

A THOUSAND thanks to you, my dear Sir, for your observations on the list of my songs. I am happy to find your ideas so much in unison with my own respecting the generality of the airs, as well as the verses. About some of them we differ, but there is no disputing about hobby-horses. I shall not fail to profit by the remarks you make; and to reconsider the whole with attention.

"Dainty Davie" must be sung, two stanzas together, and then the chorus; 'tis the proper way. I agree with you, that there may be something of pathos, or tenderness at least, in the air of "Fee him, Father,"

when performed with feeling : but a tender cast may be given almost to any lively air, if you sing it very slowly, expressively, and with serious words. I am, however, clearly and invariably for retaining the cheerful tunes joined to their own humorous verses, wherever the verses are passable. But the sweet song for "Fee him, Father," which you began about the back of midnight, will publish as an additional one. Mr. James Balfour, the king of good fellows, and the best singer of the lively Scottish ballads that ever existed, has charmed thousands of companies with "Fee him, Father," and with "Todlin' hame" also, to the old words, which never should be disunited from either of these airs. Some Bacchanals I would wish to discard. "Fye, let's a' to the bridal," for instance, is so coarse and vulgar, that I think it fit only to be sung in a company of drunken colliers : and "Saw ye my Father" appears to me both indelicate and silly.

One word more with regard to your heroic ode. I think, with great deference to the poet, that a prudent general would avoid saying any thing to his soldiers which might tend to make death more frightful than it is. "Gory" presents a disagreeable image to the mind ; and to tell them, "Welcome to your gory bed," seems rather a discouraging address, notwithstanding the alternative which follows. I have shown the song to three friends of excellent taste, and each of them objected to this line, which emboldens me to use the freedom of bringing it again under your notice. I would suggest,

"Now prepare for honor's bed,
Or for glorious victorie."

[Some of the opinions expressed in this letter, are entitled to respect : others are so singular as to require notice. Neither "Fye, let us a' to the bridal," nor "Saw ye my Father," merit

the hard words which Thomson applies to them : for the time in which they were written, they are neither vulgar nor indelicate. Both songs till a late period continued to be sung in the best companies in Scotland, nor has the noble descendant of a house—noble both by genius and birth—hesitated to claim the merit of writing “Fye, let us a’ to the bridal,” for one of his ancestors. Something like the taste of Thomson came a few years back over a small coterie of ladies in the north : they laid the songs of Scotland before them, and placing their fingers on all such parts as they reckoned indelicate, held a consultation upon the meaning, and after many shakings of the head and whisperings in the ear, they smoothed down without remorse whatever seemed to rise higher than their fanciful level of purity. The concluding paragraph of Thomson’s communication requires no comment : that he was wrong the world has likely by this time convinced him. Who can read his altered lines after

“Welcome to your gory bed,
Or to victorie—”

without feeling that such emendations crush the original spirit out of the verse, and give nothing in return, save increase of sound.—ED.]

No. XLV.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

September, 1793.

“WHO shall decide when doctors disagree?” My ode pleases me so much that I cannot alter it. Your proposed alterations would, in my opinion, make it tame. I am exceedingly obliged to you for putting me on reconsidering it ; as I think I have much improved it. Instead of “soger! hero!” I will have it “Caledonian! on wi’ me!”

I have scrutinized it, over and over ; and to the world, some way or other, it shall go as it is. At the same time it will not in the least hurt me, should you leave it out altogether, and adhere to your first intention of adopting Logan’s verses.

I have finished my song to “Saw ye my Father ;”

and in English, as you will see. That there is a syllable too much for the expression of the air, it is true; but allow me to say, that the mere dividing of a dotted crotchet into a crotchet and a quaver, is not a great matter; however, in that, I have no pretensions to cope in judgment with you. Of the poetry I speak with confidence; but the music is a business where I hint my ideas with the utmost diffidence.

The old verses have merit, though unequal, and are popular: my advice is to set the air to the old words, and let mine follow as English verses. Here they are—

FAIR JENNY.

Tune—"Saw ye my Father."

I.

WHERE are the joys I have met in the morning,
That danc'd to the lark's early song?
Where is the peace that awaited my wand'ring,
At evening the wild woods among?

II.

No more a-winding the course of yon river,
And marking sweet flow'rets so fair:
No more I trace the light footsteps of pleasure,
But sorrow and sad sighing care.

III.

Is it that summer's forsaken our valleys,
And grim, surly winter is near?
No, no, the bees' humming round the gay roses,
Proclaim it the pride of the year.

IV.

Fain would I hide, what I fear to discover,
Yet long, long too well have I known,
All that has caused this wreck in my bosom,
Is Jenny, fair Jenny alone.

V.

Time cannot aid me, my griefs are immortal,
Nor hope dare a comfort bestow :
Come then, enamour'd and fond of my anguish,
Enjoyment I'll seek in my woe.

Adieu, my dear Sir ! The post goes, so I shall defer
some other remarks until more leisure.

[Mr. Thomson very properly adopted the song of "Bannockburn," as the bard presented it to him. He attached it to the air of "Lewie Gordon," and perhaps among the existing airs he could not find a better : but the poetry is suited to a much higher strain of music, and may employ the genius of some Scottish Handel, if any such should in future arise. The reader will have observed, that Burns adopted the alterations proposed by his friend and correspondent in former instances, with great readiness ; perhaps indeed, on all indifferent occasions. In the present instance, however, he rejected them, though repeatedly urged with determined resolution. With every respect for the judgment of Mr. Thomson and his friends, we may be satisfied that he did so. He who in preparing for an engagement attempts to withdraw his imagination from images of death, will probably have but imperfect success ; and is not fitted to stand in the ranks of battle, where the liberties of a kingdom are at issue. Of such men the conquerors at Bannockburn were not composed. Bruce's troops were inured to war, and familiar with all its sufferings and dangers. On the eve of that memorable day, their spirits were without doubt wound up to a pitch of enthusiasm, suited to the occasion ; a pitch of enthusiasm, at which danger becomes attractive, and the most terrific forms of death are no longer terrible. Such a strain of sentiment, this heroic "welcome" may be supposed well calculated to elevate—to raise their hearts high above fear, and to nerve their arms to the utmost pitch of mortal exertion. These observations might be illustrated and supported, by a reference to the martial poetry of all nations, from the spirit-stirring strains of Tyrtæus to the war-song of General Wolfe. Mr. Thomson's observation, that "Welcome to your gory bed," is a discouraging address, seems not sufficiently considered. Perhaps, indeed, it may be admitted, that the term gory is somewhat objectionable, not on account of its presenting a frightful, but a disagreea-

ble image to the mind. But a great poet, uttering his conceptions on an interesting occasion, seeks always to present a picture that is vivid, and is uniformly disposed to sacrifice the delicacies of taste on the altar of the imagination. And it is the privilege of superior genius, by producing a new association, to elevate expressions that were originally low, and thus to triumph over the deficiencies of language. In how many instances might this be exemplified from the works of our immortal Shakespeare :—

“ Who would fardels bear,
To groan and sweat under a weary life ;—
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin ?”

It were easy to enlarge, but to suggest such reflections is probably sufficient.—CURRIE.]

No. XLVI.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

September, 1793.

I HAVE been turning over some volumes of songs, to find verses whose measures would suit the airs for which you have allotted me to find English songs.

For “Muirland Willie” you have, in Ramsay’s Teatable, an excellent song, beginning, “Ah why those tears in Nelly’s eyes ?” As for “The Collier’s dochter,” take the following old Bacchanal :—

DELUDED SWAIN, THE PLEASURE.

I.

DELUDED swain, the pleasure
The fickle fair can give thee,
Is but a fairy treasure—
Thy hopes will soon deceive thee.

II.

The billows on the ocean,
The breezes idly roaming,
The clouds’ uncertain motion—
They are but types of woman.

III.

O! art thou not ashamed
 To doat upon a feature?
 If man thou wouldst be named,
 Despise the silly creature.

IV.

Go, find an honest fellow;
 Good claret set before thee;
 Hold on till thou art mellow,
 And then to bed in glory.

The faulty line in "Logan-Water," I mend thus:—

"How can your flinty hearts enjoy
 The widow's tears, the orphan's cry?"

The song, otherwise, will pass. As to "M'Gregoira Rua-Ruth," you will see a song of mine to it, with a set of the air superior to yours in the Museum. Vol. II. p. 81. The song begins:—

Raving winds around her blowing."*

Your Irish airs are pretty, but they are downright Irish. If they were like the "Banks of Banna," for instance, though really Irish, yet in the Scottish taste, you might adopt them. Since you are so fond of Irish music, what say you to twenty-five of them in an additional number? We could easily find this quantity of charming airs; I will take care that you shall not want songs; and I assure you that you would find it the most saleable of the whole. If you do not approve of "Roy's wife," for the music's sake, we shall not insert it. "Deil tak the wars," is a charming song; so is "Saw ye my Peggy?" "There's nae luck about the house" well deserves a place. I cannot say that "O'er the hills and far awa," strikes me as equal to your selection. "This is no my ain house," is a great favorite air of mine; and if you will send me your

* This will be found in the middle of this volume.—Ed.

set of it, I will task my muse to her highest effort. What is your opinion of "I hae laid a herrin' in sawt?" I like it much. Your jacobite airs are pretty: and there are many others of the same kind, pretty: but you have not room for them. You cannot, I think insert, "Fye, let's a' to the bridal" to any other words than its own.

What pleases me as simple and *naïve*, disgusts you as ludicrous and low. For this reason, "Fye, gie me my coggie, Sirs," "Fye, let's a' to the bridal," with several others of that cast, are to me, highly pleasing; while, "Saw ye my Father, or saw ye my Mother?" delights me with its descriptive simple pathos. Thus my song, "Ken ye what Meg o' the Mill has gotten?" pleases myself so much, that I cannot try my hand at another song to the air; so I shall not attempt it. I know you will laugh at all this; but, "Ilka man wears his belt his ain gait."

[Burns in the song to the air of "The Collier's Daughter," seems to have had in mind the famous old northern chaunt:—

"Fye, gie me my coggie, Sirs,
And fye, gie me my coggie;
I wadna gie my three-girred cog,
For a' the queans in Bogie."

The songs which the Poet enumerates in this letter, and the opinions which he expresses on their merits, are such as might be looked for from one who felt humor and tenderness, pathos and simplicity, with all the force of true genius. The refinement which would exclude from society such songs as "Fye, gie me my coggie, Sirs," "Fye, let us a' t the bridal," "The Auld Gudeman," "Meg o' the mill," and others of a similar stamp, is of a very questionable kind. Catherine of Russia was the purest in speech of all the sovereigns of her day: a slip of the tongue, or a suspicious allusion, were rewarded with Siberia or the knout. The purest in speech was the grossest in act—

"For, in such matters, Russia's mighty Empress
Behaved no better than a common sempstress.—Ed.]

No. XLVII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

October, 1793.

YOUR last letter, my dear Thomson, was indeed laden with heavy news. Alas! poor Erskine!* The recollection that he was a coadjutor in your publication, has, till now, scared me from writing to you, or turning my thoughts on composing for you.

I am pleased that you are reconciled to the air of the "Quaker's wife;" though, by the by, an old Highland gentleman and a deep antiquarian tells me, it is a Gaelic air, and known by the name of "Leiger m' choss." The following verses, I hope, will please you, as an English song to the air:—

NANCY.

I.

THINE am I, my faithful fair,
Thine my lovely Nancy;
Ev'ry pulse along my veins,
Ev'ry roving fancy.

II.

To thy bosom lay my heart,
There to throb and languish:
Tho' despair had wrung its core,
That would heal its anguish.

III.

Take away those rosy lips,
Rich with balmy treasure:
Turn away thine eyes of love,
Lest I die with pleasure.

* The Honorable A. Erskine, brother to Lord Kelly, whose melancholy death Mr. Thomson had communicated in an excellent letter which he has suppressed.—CURRIE.

IV.

What is life when wanting love ?
 Night without a morning :
 Love's the cloudless summer sun,
 Nature gay adorning.

[We owe this song, it is said, to the charms of Clarinda. The words bear no resemblance to the old strains which accompany the air of "The Quaker's wife," to which it is adapted :—

" Merrily danced the Quaker's wife,
 Merrily danced the Quaker ;
 Merrily danced the Quaker's wife,
 Wi' a' her bairns about her."

The lover of old English poetry will perceive a resemblance between the third verse of the song of Burns, and that truly exquisite one attributed to Shakspeare :—

" Take, oh ! take those lips away,
 That so sweetly were forsworn ;
 And those eyes the break of day,
 Lights that do mislead the morn :
 But my kisses bring again,
 Seals of love, but sealed in vain."

While those who read the Bible will not fail to recollect the passage from which both bards drew their ideas :—" Take away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me."

Burns, in communicating this song to Thomson, recommended several lyrics written by Gavin Turnbull. "Possibly, as he is an old friend of mine," he says, "I may be prejudiced in his favor ; but I like some of his pieces very much :—

'THE NIGHTINGALE.

' BY G. TURNBULL.

' Thou sweetest minstrel of the grove,
 That ever tried the plaintive strain ;
 Awake thy tender tale of love,
 And soothe a poor forsaken swain.

' For, tho' the muses deign to aid,
 And teach him smoothly to complain ;
 Yet Delia, charming, cruel maid,
 Is deaf to her forsaken swain.

‘ All day, with fashion’s gaudy sons,
In sport she wanders o’er the plain ;
Their tales approves, and still she shuns
The notes of her forsaken swain.

‘ When evening shades obscure the sky,
And bring the solemn hours again,
Begin sweet bird, thy melody,
And sooth a poor forsaken swain.’

“ I shall just transcribe another of Turnbull’s, which would go charmingly to ‘ Lewie Gordon :’—

‘ LAURA.

‘ BY G. TURNBULL.

‘ Let me wander where I will,
By shady wood, or winding rill ;
Where the sweetest May-born flowers
Paint the meadows, deck the bowers ;
Where the linnet’s early song
Echoes sweet the woods among :
Let me wander where I will,
Laura haunts my fancy still.

‘ If at rosy dawn I choose
To indulge the smiling muse ;
If I court some cool retreat,
To avoid the noon-tide heat ;
If beneath the moon’s pale ray,
Thro’ unfrequented wilds I stray ;
Let me wander where I will,
Laura haunts my fancy still.

‘ When at night the drowsy god
Waves his sleep-compelling rod,
And to fancy’s wakeful eyes
Bids celestial visions rise ;
While with boundless joy I rove
Thro’ the fairy land of love :
Let me wander where I will,
Laura haunts my fancy still.’

“ The rest of your letter I shall answer at some other opportunity.”

These songs have been preserved because Burns seems to have liked them : it is not quite safe to reject as indifferent the strains which he sanctioned.—ED.]

No XLVIII.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

7th November, 1793.

MY GOOD SIR,

AFTER so long a silence it gave me peculiar pleasure to recognise your well-known hand, for I had begun to be apprehensive that all was not well with you. I am happy to find, however, that your silence did not proceed from that cause, and that you have got among the ballads once more.

I have to thank you for your English song to "Leiger m' choss," which I think extremely good, although the coloring is warm. Your friend Mr. Turnbull's songs have doubtless considerable merit; and as you have the command of his manuscripts, I hope you may find out some that will answer as English songs, to the airs yet unprovided.

[During almost the whole period that Burns lived in Dumfries, he was suffering from the twofold misery of misrepresentation and poverty. His farming speculations had drained his pockets of money, and the base and the malevolent laboring to deprive him of bread. Well might he say as he did, that he had small heart to sing. Can the lark warble under the wing of the raven?—ED.]

No. XLIX.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

December, 1793.

TELL me how you like the following verses to the tune of "Jo Janet;"—

I.

HUSBAND, husband, cease your strife,
Nor longer idly rave, sir;

Tho' I am your wedded wife,
Yet I am not your slave, sir.
"One of two must still obey,
Nancy, Nancy ;
Is it man, or woman, say,
My spouse, Nancy ?"

II.

If 'tis still the lordly word,
Service and obedience ;
I'll desert my sov'reign lord,
And so, good b'ye, allegiance !
"Sad will I be, so bereft,
Nancy, Nancy ;
Yet I'll try to make a shift,
My spouse, Nancy."

III.

My poor heart then break it must,
My last hour I'm near it:
When you lay me in the dust,
Think, think, how you will bear it.
"I will hope and trust in heaven,
Nancy, Nancy ;
Strength to bear it will be given,
My spouse, Nancy."

IV.

Well, sir, from the silent dead,
Still I'll try to daunt you ;
Ever round your midnight bed
Horrid sprites shall haunt you.
"I'll wed another, like my dear
Nancy, Nancy ;
Then all hell will fly for fear,
My spouse, Nancy."

[In composing this song the Poet had in his eye the lyrics of

the olden time : the more immediate object of his imitation was
 “My Jo Janet,” in the collection of Allan Ramsay, beginning—

“Sweet Sir, for your courtesie,
 When ye come to the Bass, then
 For the love ye bear to me,
 Buy me a keeking-glass, then.”
 “Keek into the draw well,
 Janet, Janet,
 And there ye’ll see your bonnie sel’,
 My Jo Janet.”

Burns regretted that he had not sooner turned his thoughts upon
 lyrics of a conversational character.—ED.]

WILT THOU BE MY DEARIE?

Tune—*The Suitor’s Dochter.*”

I.

WILT thou be my dearie?
 When sorrow wrings thy gentle heart,
 Wilt thou let me cheer thee?
 By the treasure of my soul,
 That’s the love I bear thee!
 I swear and vow that only thou
 Shall ever be my dearie.
 Only thou, I swear and vow,
 Shall ever be my dearie.

II.

Lassie, say thou lo’es me;
 Or if thou wilt na be my ain,
 Say na thou’lt refuse me:
 If it winna, canna be,
 Thou for thine may choose me,
 Let me, lassie, quickly die,
 Trusting that thou lo’es me.
 Lassie, let me quickly die,
 Trusting that thou lo’es me.

[This song is said to have been composed in honor of the charms of Janet Miller, of Dalswinton, mother to the present Earl of Mar, and at that time one of the loveliest women in all the south of Scotland. The Poet thought so well of it, that he gave a copy to Johnson as well as to Thomson.—ED.]

BUT LATELY SEEN.

Tune—"The winter of life."

I.

BUT lately seen in gladsome green,
 The woods rejoiced the day;
 Thro' gentle showers the laughing flowers,
 In double pride were gay:
 But now our joys are fled
 On winter blasts awa!
 Yet maiden May, in rich array,
 Again shall bring them a'.

II.

But my white pow, nae kindly thowe
 Shall melt the snaws of age;
 My trunk of eild, but buss or bield,
 Sinks in Time's wintry rage.
 Oh! age has weary days,
 And nights o' sleepless pain!
 Thou golden time o' youthfu' prime,
 Why comes thou not again?

[Though Burns gave much of his musing time to the work of Thomson, he did not neglect his earlier friend Johnson, but contributed new as well as amended lyrics from time to time, and took a lively interest in the success of the work. "The Winter of Life," is one of those communications.—"Perhaps," says the Poet to the publisher, "you may not find your account lucratively in this business; but you are a patriot for the music of your country; and I am certain posterity will look on themselves as highly indebted to your public spirit. Have you never a fair goddess that leads you a wild-goose chase of amorous devo-

tion? Let me know a few of her qualities, such as whether she be rather black, or fair; plump, or thin; short, or tall: and choose your air, and I shall task my muse to celebrate her." It is not known what reply Johnson made to the latter part of this epistle: he was a plain, blunt man, and cared little about the graces of song, or the melody of music, save in the way of his trade.—ED.]

TO MARY.

'Tune—" *Could aught of song.*"

I.

COULD aught of song declare my pains,
 Could artful numbers move thee,
 The muse should tell, in labor'd strains,
 O Mary, how I love thee!
 They who but feign a wounded heart
 May teach the lyre to languish;
 But what avails the pride of art,
 When wastes the soul with anguish?

II.

Then let the sudden bursting sigh
 The heart-felt pang discover:
 And in the keen, yet tender eye,
 O read th' imploring lover.
 For well I know thy gentle mind
 Disdains art's gay disguising;
 Beyond what fancy e'er refined,
 The voice of nature prizing.

[These tender verses seem to have been inspired as much by Hamilton's song of "Ah! the Shepherd's mournful Fate," as by the charms of Mary. It is in one of the latter volumes of Johnson's Musical Museum.—ED.]

HERE'S TO THY HEALTH, MY BONNIE LASS.

Tune—"Laggan Burn."

I.

HERE's to thy health, my bonnie lass,
Gude night, and joy be wi' thee;
I'll come nae mair to thy bower-door,
To tell thee that I lo'e thee.
O dinna think, my pretty pink,
But I can live without thee:
I vow and swear I dinna care
How lang ye look about ye.

II.

Thou'rt ay sae free informing me
Thou hast nae mind to marry;
I'll be as free informing thee
Nae time hae I to tarry.
I ken thy friends try ilka means,
Frae wedlock to delay thee;
Depending on some higher chance—
But fortune may betray thee.

III.

I ken they scorn my low estate,
But that does never grieve me;
But I'm as free as any he,
Sma' siller will relieve me.
I count my health my greatest wealth,
Sae long as I'll enjoy it:
I'll fear nae scant, I'll bode nae want,
As lang's I get employment.

IV.

But far off fowls hae feathers fair,
And ay until ye try them:
Tho' they seem fair, still have a care,
They may prove waur than I am.

But at twal at night, when the moon shines bright,
 My dear, I'll come and see thee;
 For the man that lo'es his mistress weel
 Nae travel makes him weary.

[This was a song of the Poet's youthful days: he trimmed it up a little for the Museum, and adapted it to the beautiful tune called "Laggan Burn." The words resemble, here and there, the song beginning

"My father was a farmer
 Upon the Carrick border."

There is more of the man in his early verses, and more sentiment in his latter ones.—ED.]

THE FAREWELL.

Tune—"It was a' for our rightfu' king."

I.

It was a' for our rightfu' king,
 We left fair Scotland's strand;
 It was a' for our rightfu' king
 We e'er saw Irish land,
 My dear;
 We e'er saw Irish land.

II.

Now a' is done that men can do,
 And a' is done in vain;
 My love and native land farewell,
 For I maun cross the main,
 My dear;
 For I maun cross the main.

III.

He turned him right, and round about
 Upon the Irish shore;

And gae his bridle-reins a shake,
 With adieu for evermore,
 My dear;
 With adieu for evermore.

IV.

The sodger from the wars returns,
 The sailor frae the main;
 But I hae parted frae my love,
 Never to meet again,
 My dear;
 Never to meet again.

V.

When day is gane, and night is come,
 And a' folk bound to sleep;
 I think on him that's far awa',
 The lee-lang night, and weep,
 My dear;
 The lee-lang night, and weep.

[Hogg, in his notes to the Jacobite Reliques, says this song was written by Captain Ogilvie, who was killed on the banks of the Rhine, in the year 1695. Sir Walter Scott, in the last edition of his works, refers to his beautiful song "A weary lot is thine," in the third canto of Rokeby, and says "The last verse is taken from the fragment of an old Scottish ballad, of which I only recollected two verses when the first edition of Rokeby was published. Mr. Thomas Sheridan kindly pointed out to me an entire copy of this beautiful song, which seems to express the fortunes of some follower of the Stuart family." The song, as copied by Scott, is nearly word for word with that of Burns in the fifth volume of Johnson's Musical Museum: it is, nevertheless, probable that the Poet rather beautified or amended some ancient strain which he had discovered, than wrote it wholly from his own heart and fancy.—ED.]

O STEER HER UP.

Tune—" *O steer her up, and haud her gaun.*"

I.

O STEER her up and haud her gaun—

Her mother's at the mill, jo ;
And gin she winna take a man,
E'en let her take her will, jo :
First shore her wi' a kindly kiss,
And ca' another gill, jo,
And gin she take the thing amiss,
E'en let her flyte her fill, jo.

II.

O steer her up, and be na blate,
An' gin she take it ill, jo,
Then lea'e the lassie till her fate,
And time nae longer spill, jo :
Ne'er break your heart for ae rebute,
But think upon it still, jo ;
Then gin the lassie winna do't,
Ye'll fin' anither will, jo.

[Allan Ramsay found a wild old song of this name and measure, and adopting the first four lines, penned a drinking ditty, which may be found in the *Tea Table Miscellany*. The second verse will be sample sufficient :—

" See that shining glass of claret,
How invitingly it looks ;
Take it aff, and let's hae mair o't—
Pox on fighting, trade, and books :
Let's have pleasure while we're able,
Bring us in the mickle bowl ;
Place't on the middle o' the table,
And let wind and weather yowl."

Burns took the first four lines of the old strain, and eked them out in his own way : he, however, glanced at the ancient verses, and may be said to have removed both their indelicacy and their wit.—ED.]

O AY MY WIFE SHE DANG ME.

Tune—"My wife she dang me."

I.

O AY my wife she dang me,
 And aft my wife did bang me,
 If ye gie a woman a' her will,
 Gude faith, she'll soon o'er-gang ye.
 On peace and rest my mind was bent,
 And fool I was I married;
 But never honest man's intent,
 As cursedly miscarried.

II.

Some sairie comfort still at last,
 When a' their days are done, man;
 My pains o' hell on earth are past,
 I'm sure o' bliss aboon, man.
 O ay my wife she dang me,
 And aft my wife did bang me,
 If ye gie a woman a' her will,
 Gude faith, she'll soon o'er-gang ye.

[Verses of an old song of the same name, and descanting on the same subject of this little humorous lyric, are still remembered in Scotland. But it is only when the wine has flowed freely and the tongue has taken out a licence that stanzas so wittily wild are repeated.—ED.]

OH, WERT THOU IN THE CAULD BLAST.

Tune—"Lass o' Livistone."

I.

OH, wert thou in the cauld blast
 On yonder lea, on yonder lea,
 My plaidie to the angry airt,
 I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee:

Or did misfortune's bitter storms
 Around thee blaw, around thee blaw,
 Thy bield should be my bosom,
 To share it a', to share it a'.

II.

Or were I in the wildest waste,
 Sae black and bare, sae black and bare,
 The desert were a paradise,
 If thou wert there, if thou wert there :
 Or were I monarch o' the globe,
 Wi' thee to reign, wi' thee to reign,
 The brightest jewel in my crown
 Wad be my queen, wad be my queen.

[Burns composed this song, tradition asserts, in honor of the beauteous Mrs. Riddel: neither the song of Ramsay to the same air, beginning with

“ ained with her slighting Jamie's love,
 Bell drop't a tear, Bell dropt a tear,”

nor the more ancient strain of the “Lass o' Livistone,” afforded aid to the Poet in this beautiful song. There are, however, some fine snatches in the latter, but they grow like lilies amongst nettles :—

“ The bonnie lass o' Livistone,
 Her name ye ken, her name ye ken,
 And ay the welcomer ye'll be,
 The farther ben, the farther ben.
 And she has written in her contract
 To lie her lane, to lie her lane—
 To let the lassie keep her word
 Wad be a hame w d be a shame.

“ The bonnie lass o' Livistone
 Is fair to see, is fair to see ;
 With what a light look and a loup
 She came to me, she came to me.
 She has a black and a rolling ee,
 An' a dimplit chin, an' a dimplit chin ;
 And no to taste her rosie lip ;
 Wad be a sin, wad be a sin.”

Other versions of these old verses exist, but their decorum is inferior to their wit.—ED.]

No L.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, 17th April, 1794.

MY DEAR SIR,

OWING to the distress of our friend for the loss of his child, at the time of his receiving your admirable but melancholy letter, I had not an opportunity till lately of perusing it.* How sorry I am to find Burns saying, "canst thou not minister to a mind diseased?" while he is delighting others from one end of the island to the other. Like the hypochondriac who went to consult a physician upon his case—"Go," says the doctor, "and see the famous Carlini, who keeps all Paris in good humor." "Alas! Sir," replied the patient, "I am that unhappy Carlini!"

Your plan for our meeting together pleases me greatly, and I trust that by some means or other it will soon take place; but your Bacchanalian challenge almost frightens me, for I am a miserable weak drinker!

Allan is much gratified by your good opinion of his talents. He has just begun a sketch from your "Cotter's Saturday Night," and if it pleases himself in the design, he will probably etch or engrave it. In subjects of the pastoral and humorous kind, he is perhaps unrivalled by any artist living. He fails a little in giving beauty and grace to his females, and his coloring is sombre; otherwise, his paintings and drawings would be in greater request.

I like the music of the "Sutor's dochter," and will consider whether it shall be added to the last volume; your verses to it are pretty; but your humorous English song to suit "Jo Janet," is inimitable. What think you of the air, "Within a mile of Edinburgh?"

* A letter to Mr. Cunningham.

It has always struck me as a modern English imitation, but it is said to be Oswald's, and is so much liked that I believe I must include it. The verses are little better than namby-pamby. Do you consider it worth a stanza or two?

[The painter who pleased Burns and Thomson so much with his shepherds and shepherdesses, was David Allan: he studied in Rome and in London, but acquired little fame from his classic efforts compared to what he achieved by his delineations of the pastoral scenes and happy peasantry of his native country. With loveliness he could do little: but give him an old cottage, with older plenishing and still older inhabitants, and he could do all but work miracles. An ancient chair with a dog sleeping—or seeming to sleep—under it: an old woman twirling her distaff in the sun, with her cat and her chickens around her: or an old man sitting ruminating at his own fireside, with his Bible on his knees, inspired him at once; and in subjects such as these he has never been surpassed. His illustrations of Ramsay's Gentle Shepherd will bear out these commendations: his Glaud and Symon, his Mause and Madge, are inimitable: not so his Patie and his Peggie: his forte lay in representing humorous characters, and he failed when youth and loveliness came before him to be limned. His mantle—with a double portion of his power—has fallen on David Wilkie.—ED.]

No. LI.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

May, 1794.

MY DEAR SIR,

I RETURN you the plates, with which I am highly pleased; I would humbly propose, instead of the younker knitting stockings, to put a stock and horn into his hands. A friend of mine, who is positively the ablest judge on the subject I have ever met with, and, though an unknown, is yet a superior artist with the burin, is quite charmed with Allan's manner. I

got him a peep of the Gentle Shepherd ; and he pronounces Allan a most original artist of great excellence.

For my part, I look on Mr. Allan's choosing my favorite poem for his subject, to be one of the highest compliments I have ever received.

I am quite vexed at Pleyel's being cooped up in France, as it will put an entire stop to our work. Now, and for six or seven months, I shall be quite in song, as you shall see by and by. I got an air, pretty enough, composed by Lady Elizabeth Heron, of Heron, which she calls "The banks of Cree." Cree is a beautiful romantic stream : and, as her Ladyship is a particular friend of mine, I have written the following song to it :—

HERE IS THE GLEN.

Tune—" *Banks of Cree.* "

I.

HERE is the glen, and here the bower,
All underneath the birchen shade ;
The village-bell has told the hour—
O what can stay my lovely maid ?

II.

'Tis not Maria's whispering call ;
'Tis but the balmy-breathing gale,
Mixed with some warbler's dying fall,
The dewy star of eve to hail.

III.

It is Maria's voice I hear !
So calls the woodlark in the grove,
His little, faithful mate to cheer,
At once 'tis music—and 'tis love.

IV.

And art thou come ? and art thou true ?
O welcome, dear to love and me !
And let us all our vows renew
Along the flow'ry banks of Cree.

[The Poet had a double task to perform for the family of Kerrough-tree: he wrote lyrics in honor of the lady, and lampoons for the benefit of the laird. The first was a task according to his heart, and he performed it the readier that Lady Elizabeth Heron was fair and accomplished: of his success in the latter, the Heron Ballads have already informed the reader. In a note to the last of these lampoons, misled by an old rumour and manuscript memoranda, we made a statement which, we are glad to learn, is wholly unfounded. Mr. Heron certainly lost his election, and died on his way back to Scotland: but his nature was too noble, and his mind too pious, to allow political disappointment to prevail against his reason: his health had been for some time giving way: he was taken ill at Grantham, and died in peace,—as all good men would desire to die.—ED.]

No. LII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

July, 1794.

Is there no news yet of Pleyel? Or is your work to be at a dead stop until the allies set our modern Orpheus at liberty from the savage thralldom of democratic discords? Alas the day! And woe is me! That auspicious period, pregnant with the happiness of millions—*

* * * * *

I have presented a copy of your songs to the daughter of a much-valued and much honored friend of mine, Mr Graham of Fintray. I wrote, on the blank side of the title-page, the following address to the young lady:—

Here, where the Scottish muse immortal lives,
In sacred strains and tuneful numbers joined,
Accept the gift; tho' humble he who gives,
Rich is the tribute of the grateful mind.

* A portion of this letter has been left out, for reasons that will be easily imagined.

So may no ruffian feeling in thy breast
 Discordant jar thy bosom-chords among;
 But peace attune thy gentle soul to rest,
 Or love ecstatic wake his seraph song:
 Or pity's notes, in luxury of tears,
 As modest want the tale of woe reveals;
 While conscious virtue all the strain endears,
 And heaven-born piety her sanction seals.

["It were to be wished," says Currie, "that instead of 'ruffian feeling' in the second verse, that the Bard had used a less rugged epithet—*e. g.* *ruder.*" Burns seldom failed to clothe his thoughts in suitable language: the sentiment put on at once its livery of words, and he was loth to make alterations. The remark of Currie strikes, not at this expression alone, but at the general language of the Poet's verse. We must take him as we find him; had he softened down his masculine energy, he would have robbed his poems of a great charm: the rose would be less lovely were its thorns removed, and how would the thistle look without its prickles? The cry of the eagle can never be tamed down into the song of the lark, nor the wild note of the blackbird sobered into that of the wren.—ED.]

No. LIII.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, 10th August, 1794.

MY DEAR SIR,

I OWE you an apology for having so long delayed to acknowledge the favor of your last. I fear it will be as you say, I shall have no more songs from Pleyel till France and we are friends; but, nevertheless, I am very desirous to be prepared with the poetry, and as the season approaches in which your muse of Coila visits you, I trust I shall, as formerly, be frequently gratified with the result of your amorous and tender interviews!

[Burns in the preceding letter, and Thomson in this, allude to the commencement of that terrible war which shook the thrones of Europe, and strewed hill and vale with slaughtered bodies. Democratic ferocity on one side, and kingly tyranny on the other, turned the Continent into a battle-field: the notes of Pleyel were unheard amid the trumpet-sound and the din of artillery: and some of the songs of Burns, expressing a manly—a true Scottish-love for freedom—were for a time unacceptable to the people of Britain.—ED.]

No. LIV.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

30th August, 1794.

THE last evening, as I was straying out, and thinking of “O’er the hills and far away,” I spun the following stanza for it; but whether my spinning will deserve to be laid up in store, like the precious thread of the silkworm, or brushed to the devil like the vile manufacture of the spider, I leave, my dear Sir, to your usual candid criticism. I was pleased with several lines in it, at first; but I own that now it appears rather a flimsy business.

This is just a hasty sketch, until I see whether it be worth a critique. We have many sailor songs; but, as far as I at present recollect, they are mostly the effusions of the jovial sailor, not the wailings of his love-lorn mistress. I must here make one sweet exception—“Sweet Annie frae the sea-beach came.” Now for the song:—

ON THE SEAS AND FAR AWAY.

Tune—“O’er the hills,” &c.

I.

How can my poor heart be glad,
When absent from my sailor lad?

How can I the thought forego,
He's on the seas to meet the foe?
Let me wander, let me rove,
Still my heart is with my love:
Nightly dreams, and thoughts by day,
Are with him that's far away.

On the seas and far away,
On stormy seas and far away;
Nightly dreams, and thoughts by day,
Are ay with him that's far away.

II.

When in summer's noon I faint,
As weary flocks around me pant,
Haply in the scorching sun
My sailor's thund'ring at his gun:
Bullets, spare my only joy!
Bullets, spare my darling boy!
Fate do with me what you may—
Spare but him that's far away!

III.

At the starless midnight hour,
When winter rules with boundless power;
As the storms the forest tear,
And thunders rend the howling air,
Listening to the doubling roar,
Surging on the rocky shore,
All I can—I weep and pray,
For his weal that's far away.

IV.

Peace, thy olive wand extend,
And bid wild war his ravage end,
Man with brother man to meet,
And as a brother kindly greet:
Then may heaven with prosp'rous gales
Fill my sailor's welcome sails,
To my arms their charge convey—
My dear lad that's far away.

On the seas and far away,
 On stormy seas and far away ;
 Nightly dreams, and thoughts by day,
 Are ay with him that's far away.

I give you leave to abuse this song, but do it in the
 the spirit of Christian meekness.

No. LV.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, 16th Sept., 1794.

MY DEAR SIR

YOU have anticipated my opinion of "On the seas
 and far away ;" I do not think it one of your very
 happy productions, though it certainly contains stanzas
 that are worthy of all acceptation.

The second is the least to my liking, particularly
 "Bullets, spare my only joy." Confound the bullets !
 It might, perhaps, be objected to the third verse, "At
 the starless midnight hour," that it has too much
 grandeur of imagery, and that greater simplicity of
 thought would have better suited the character of a
 sailor's sweetheart. The tune, it must be remembered,
 is of the brisk, cheerful kind. Upon the whole, there-
 fore, in my humble opinion, the song would be better
 adapted to the tune, if it consisted only of the first
 and last verses, with the choruses.

[The objections raised by Thomson to this song seem to have
 been unacceptable to Currie. The verses proposed to be omit-
 ted are the most original and touching : the third, in particular,
 is a noble one, and in keeping with the excited feelings of a lady
 whose love is on the great deep, exposed to the accidents of bat-
 tle and the extremities of the tempest.—ED.]

No. LVI.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

Sept., 1794.

I SHALL withdraw my "On the seas and far away" altogether: it is unequal, and unworthy the work. Making a poem is like begetting a son; you cannot know whether you have a wise man or a fool, until you produce him to the world to try him.

For that reason I send you the offspring of my brain, abortions and all; and as such, pray look over them and forgive them, and burn them. I am flattered at your adopting "Ca' the yowes to the knowes," as it was owing to me that ever it saw the light. About seven years ago, I was well acquainted with a worthy little fellow of a clergyman, a Mr. Clunie, who sung it charmingly; and, at my request, Mr. Clark took it down from his singing. When I gave it to Johnson, I added some stanzas to the song, and mended others, but still it will not do for you. In a solitary stroll, which I took to-day, I tried my hand on a few pastoral lines, following up the idea of the chorus, which I would preserve. Here it is, with all its crudities and imperfections on its head.

CA' THE YOWES.

I.

Ca' the yowes to the knowes,
Ca' them whare the heather growes,
Ca' them where the burnie rowes—

My bonnie dearie!

Hark the mavis' evening sang
Sounding Clouden's woods amang!

Then a faulding let us gang,

My bonnie dearie.

II.

We'll gae down by Clouden side,
Thro' the hazels spreading wide,
O'er the waves that sweetly glide
To the moon sae clearly.

III.

Yonder Clouden's silent towers,
Where at moonshine midnight hours,
O'er the dewy bending flowers,
Fairies dance sae cheery.

IV.

Ghaist nor bogle shalt thou fear;
Thou'rt to love and heaven sae dear,
Nocht of ill may come thee near,
My bonnie dearie.

V.

Fair and lovely as thou art,
Thou hast stown my very heart;
I can die—but canna part—
My bonnie dearie!
Ca' the yowes to the knowes,
Ca' them whare the heather growes,
Ca' them whare the burnie rowes—
My bonnie dearie!

I shall give you my opinion of your other newly adopted songs, my first scribbling fit.

[The water, on the banks of which the scene of this lyric is laid, is a beautiful stream, and known by three names, Cairn, Dalgoner, and Clouden. Under the first name, it finds its way over wild uplands, among flocks of sheep and coveys of black grouse: under the second, it washes the walls of old castles, rural villages, and seems at one place to be lost among thick groves of hazel and holly; and under the third name, it finds its way among romantic rocks, where it forms a succession of deep clear pools, connected by leaps or falls, the individual murmurings of which are any thing but unmusical; and, finally, it

unites itself with the Nith in the shadow of the towers of Linclouden. Burns formed this song upon an older lyric, an amended version of which is inserted in the second volume of this work.—ED.]

No. LVII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

September, 1794.

Do you know a blackguard Irish song, called "Onagh's Water-fall"? The air is charming, and I have often regretted the want of decent verses too it. It is too much, at least for my humble rustic muse, to expect that every effort of her's shall have merit: still I think that it is better to have mediocre verses to a favorite air than none at all. On this principle I have all along proceeded in the Scots Musical Museum; and as that publication is at its last volume, I intend the following song, to the air above mentioned, for that work.

If it does not suit you as an editor, you may be pleased to have verses to it that you can sing before ladies.

SHE SAYS SHE LO'ES ME BEST OF A'.

Tune—"Onagh's Water-fall."

I.

SAE flaxen were her ringlets,
 Her eyebrows of a darker hue,
 Bewitchingly o'er-arching
 Twa laughin' een o' bonnie blue.
 Her smiling sae wyling,
 Wad make a wretch forget his woe;
 What pleasure, what treasure,
 Unto these rosy lips to grow:

Such was my Chloris' bonnie face,
 When first her bonnie face I saw ;
 And ay my Chloris' dearest charm
 She says she lo'es me best of a'

II.

Like harmony her motion ;
 Her pretty ankle is a spy
 Betraying fair proportion,
 Wad mak a saint forget the sky.
 Sae warming, sae charming,
 Her faultless form and gracefu' air ;
 Ilk feature—auld nature
 Declar'd that she could do nae mair :
 Her's are the willing chains o' love,
 By conquering beauty's sovereign law ;
 And ay my Chloris' dearest charm,
 She says she lo'es me best of a'.

III.

Let others love the city,
 And gaudy show at sunny noon ;
 Gie me the lonely valley,
 The dewy eve, and rising moon
 Fair beaming, and streaming,
 Her silver light the boughs amang ;
 While falling, recalling,
 The amorous thrush concludes his sang :
 There, dearest Chloris, wilt thou rove
 By wimpling burn and leafy shaw,
 And hear my vows o' truth and love,
 And say thou lo'est me best of a'.

Not to compare small things with great, my taste in music is like the mighty Frederick of Prussia's taste in painting : we are told that he frequently admired what the connoisseurs decried, and always without any hypocrisy, confessed his admiration. I am sensible that my taste in music must be inelegant and vulgar, be-

cause people of undisputed and cultivated taste can find no merit in my favorite tunes. Still, because I am cheaply pleased, is that any reason why I should deny myself that pleasure? Many of our strathspeys, ancient and modern, give me most exquisite enjoyment, where you and other judges would probably be showing disgust. For instance, I am just now making verses for "Rothemurche's Rant," an air which puts me in raptures; and, in fact, unless I be pleased with the tune, I never can make verses to it. Here I have Clarke on my side, who is a judge that I will pit against any of you. "Rothemurche," he says, is an air both original and beautiful; and, on his recommendation, I have taken the first part of the tune for a chorus, and the fourth, or last part, for the song. I am but two stanzas deep in the work, and possibly you may think, and justly, that the poetry is as little worth your attention as the music.*

I have begun anew, "Let me in this ae night." Do you think that we ought to retain the old chorus? I think we must retain both the old chorus and the first stanza of the old song. I do not altogether like the third line of the first stanza, but cannot alter it to please myself. I am just three stanzas deep in it. Would you have the *dénouement* to be successful or otherwise? Should she "let him in" or not?

Did you not once propose "The Sow's tail to Geordie" as an air for your work? I am quite delighted with it; but I acknowledge that is no mark of its real excellence. I once set about verses for it, which I meant to be in the alternate way of a lover and his mistress chanting together. I have not the pleasure of knowing Mrs. Thomson's Christian name, and yours I am afraid is rather burlesque for sentiment, else I

* In the original follow here two stanzas of a song, beginning "Lassie wi' the lintwhite locks," which will be found at full length afterwards.—CURRIE.

had meant to have made you the hero and the heroine of the little piece.

How do you like the following epigram, which I wrote the other day, on a lovely young girl's recovery from a fever? Doctor Maxwell was the physician who seemingly saved her from the grave; and to him I address the following:—

TO DR. MAXWELL.

ON MISS JESSIE STAIG'S RECOVERY.

Maxwell, if merit here you crave,
That merit I deny;
You save fair Jessie from the grave?—
An angel could not die.

God grant you patience with this stupid epistle!

[The lady with the flaxen tresses was Jean Lorimer, or Mrs. Whelpdale, as she loved to be called: her husband had, at this period, deserted her, and she was oftener to be found at Dumfries than at Kemmis-hall, the residence of her father. Of her beauty something has been already said: in conclusion, it may be added, that she was rather above than below the middle size, and proportioned like one of the truest productions of an ancient statuary. Her hair, which she wore flowing and abundant, fell almost in armfuls over her round neck and white shoulders: it was inclining to be waving rather than curling, and was darker than what the epithet flaxen seems to intimate. She danced and sung with much grace and sweetness: her eyes were large and lustrous, and laughed more than did her lips when she was well pleased. This minuteness will be forgiven by those who reflect that to her charms we owe some of the finest lyrics in the language.

Of Dr. Maxwell, a word or two was said in the life of the Poet. He is a skilful physician, and an accomplished gentleman. He mingled in the stormy doings of the early days of the French revolution, and escaped with difficulty, it is alleged, from the far-reaching and fierce clutches of the Jacobin Club. Tired of revolutions and politics, he retired to his native place, and, by his manners and conversation, sustained the fame of the noble house of Maxwell, of which he is a descendant.—ED.]

No. LVIII.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

I PERCEIVE the sprightly muse is now attendant upon her favorite poet, whose "wood notes wild" are become as enchanting as ever. "She says she lo'es me best of a'," is one of the pleasantest table songs I have seen, and henceforth shall be mine when the song is going round. I'll give Cunningham a copy; he can more powerfully proclaim its merit. I am far from undervaluing your taste for the strathspey music; on the contrary, I think it highly animating and agreeable, and that some of the strathspeys, when graced with such verses as yours, will make very pleasing songs, in the same way that rough Christians are tempered and softened by lovely woman, without whom, you know, they had been brutes.

I am clear for having the "Sow's tail," particularly as your proposed verses to it are so extremely promising. Geordie, as you observe, is a name only fit for burlesque composition. Mrs. Thomson's name (Katharine) is not at all poetical. Retain Jeanie, therefore, and make the other Jamie, or any other that sounds agreeably.

Your "Ca' the ewes" is a precious little morceau. Indeed I am perfectly astonished and charmed with the endless variety of your fancy. Here let me ask you whether you never seriously turned your thoughts upon dramatic writing? That is a field worthy of your genius, in which it might shine forth in all its splendor. One or two successful pieces upon the London stage would make your fortune. The rage at present is for musical dramas: few or none of those which have appeared since the "Duenna" possess much poetical merit: there is little in the conduct of the fable, or in the dialogue, to interest the audience.

They are chiefly vehicles for music and pageantry. I think you might produce a comic opera in three acts, which would live by the poetry, at the same time that it would be proper to take every assistance from her tuneful sister. Part of the songs, of course, would be to our favorite Scottish airs; the rest might be left to the London composer—Storace for Drury-lane, or Shield for Covent-garden; both of them very able and popular musicians. I believe that interest and manœuvring are often necessary to have a drama brought on: so it may be with the namby-pamby tribe of flowery scribblers; but were you to address Mr. Sheridan himself, by letter, and send him a dramatic piece, I am persuaded he would, for the honor of genius, give it a fair and candid trial. Excuse me for obtruding these hints upon your consideration.

No. LIX.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, 14th October, 1794.

THE last eight days have been devoted to the re-examination of the Scottish collections. I have read, and sung, and fiddled, and considered, till I am half blind and wholly stupid. The few airs I have added are enclosed.

Peter Pindar has at length sent me all the songs I expected from him, which are, in general, elegant and beautiful. Have you heard of a London collection of Scottish airs and songs, just published, by Mr. Ritson, an Englishman? I shall send you a copy. His introductory essay on the subject is curious, and evinces great reading and research, but does not decide the question as to the origin of our melodies; though he shows clearly that Mr. Tytler, in his ingenious dissertation, has adduced no sort of proof of the hypothe-

sis he wished to establish ; and that his classification of the airs according to the æras when they were composed, is mere fancy and conjecture. On John Pinkerton, Esq., he has no mercy ; but consigns him to damnation ! He snarls at my publication on the score of Pindar being engaged to write songs for it uncandidly and unjustly leaving it to be inferred that the songs of Scottish writers had been sent a packing to make room for Peter's. Of you he speaks with some respect, but gives you a passing hit or two for daring to dress up a little some old foolish song for the Museum. His sets of the Scottish airs are taken, he says, from the oldest collections and best authorities : many of them, however, have such a strange aspect, and are so unlike the sets which are sung by every person of taste, old or young, in town or country, that we can scarcely recognise the features of our favorites. By going to the oldest collections of our music, it does not follow that we find the melodies in their original state. These melodies had been preserved, we know not how long, by oral communication, before being collected and printed : and, as different persons sing the same air very differently, according to their accurate or confused recollection of it, so, even supposing the first collectors to have possessed the industry, the taste, and discernment to choose the best they could hear (which is far from certain,) still it must evidently be a chance whether the collections exhibit any of the melodies in the state they were first composed. In selecting the melodies for my own collection, I have been as much guided by the living as by the dead. Where these differed, I preferred the sets that appeared to me the most simple and beautiful, and the most generally approved : and, without meaning any compliment to my own capability of choosing, or speaking of the pains I have taken, I flatter myself that my sets will be found equally freed from vulgar errors on the one hand, and affected graces on the other.

[Of such a person, so skilful and so plodding—so dry and so doubting—so captious and sarcastic as Joseph Ritson, the Poet of Ayr had not heard, till his name was announced by Thomson. He was one of the most laborious of our latter antiquaries : his birth in a northern English county made him familiar with the Scottish dialect and with old ballad lore ; his education as a lawyer sharpened his faculties and disciplined him for habits of research, while his love of all that was old, and strange, and uncouth in literature amounted to a passion which, in the end, overpowered his reason. He had little or no poetic feeling ; he was a jacobite, too, and a bitter one ; but, by a transition not uncommon, became a jacobin, and, as Citizen Ritson, is yet remembered by those who had no sympathy for his researches in song. To the task of editorship he brought an acuteness which all publishers of other men's verses soon learned to dread ; and along with this came a suspicion that as Chatterton, Pinkerton, and others, had imposed new verse as old on the world, there was nothing real and genuine to be had. He boldly charged Percy with the forgery of many of the “ Reliques of Old English Poetry,” an accusation which has since been triumphantly refuted ; and he attacked the learned and laborious Warton with an acrimony new in English criticism. “ All his doings to rehearse” would take many pages ; his dissertation upon Scottish song is searching and accurate, nor is his selection of lyrics much amiss, though he has committed several mistakes in matters of taste.—ED.]

No. LX.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

19th October, 1794.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

By this morning's post I have your list, and, in general, I highly approve of it. I shall, at more leisure, give you a critique on the whole. Clarke goes to your town by to-day's fly, and I wish you would call on him and take his opinion in general : you know his taste is a standard. He will return here again in a week or two ; so, please do not miss asking for him.

One thing I hope he will do, persuade you to adop

my favorite, "Craigie-burn Wood," in your selection: it is as great a favorite of his as of mine. The lady on whom it was made is one of the finest women in Scotland; and, in fact (*entre nous*), is in a manner to me, what Sterne's Eliza was to him—a mistress, or friend, or what you will, in the guileless simplicity of Platonic love. (Now don't put any of your squinting constructions on this, or have any clishmaclaiver about it among our acquaintances.) I assure you that to my lovely friend you are indebted for many of your best songs of mine. Do you think that the sober, gin-horse routine of existence, could inspire a man with life, and love, and joy—could fire him with enthusiasm, or melt him with pathos equal to the genius of your book?—no! no!—whenever I want to be more than ordinary in song; to be in some degree equal to your diviner airs; do you imagine I fast and pray for the celestial emanation? *Tout au contraire!* I have a glorious recipe; the very one that for his own use was invented by the divinity of healing and poetry, when erst he piped to the flocks of Admetus. I put myself on a regimen of admiring a fine woman; and in proportion to the adorability of her charms, in proportion you are delighted with my verses. The lightning of her eye is the godhead of Parnassus, and the witchery of her smile, the divinity of Helicon!

To descend to business; if you like my idea of "When she cam ben she bobbet," the following stanzas of mine, altered a little from what they were formerly, when set to another air, may, perhaps, do instead of worse stanzas:—

SAW YE MY PHELY.

(QUASI DICAT PHILLIS.)

Tune—" *When she cam ben she bobbitt.*"

I.

O SAW ye my dear, my Phely ?
 O saw ye my dear, my Phely ?
 She's down i' the grove, she's wi' a new love,
 She winna come hame to her Willy.

II.

What says she, my dearest, my Phely ?
 What says she, my dearest, my Phely ?
 She lets thee to wit that she has thee forgot,
 And for ever disowns thee, her Willy.

III.

O had I ne'er seen thee, my Phely !
 O had I ne'er seen thee, my Phely !
 As light as the air, and fause as thou's fair,
 Thou's broken the heart o' thy Willy.

Now for a few miscellaneous remarks. "The Po-sie" (in the Museum) is my composition; the air was taken down from Mrs. Burns's voice. It is well known in the West Country, but the old words are trash. By the by, take a look at the tune again, and tell me if you do not think it is the original from which "Roslin Castle" is composed. The second part, in particular, for the first two or three bars, is exactly the old air. "Strathallan's Lament" is mine: the music is by our right trusty and deservedly well-beloved, Allan Masterton. "Donocht-Head" is not mine; I would give ten pounds it were. It appeared first in the Edinburgh Herald; and came to the Editor of that paper with the Newcastle post-mark on it. "Whistle o'er the lave o't" is mine: the music said to be by a John Bruce, a celebrated violin player in Dum-

fries, about the beginning of this century. This I know, Bruce, who was an honest man, though a red-wud Highlandman, constantly claimed it; and, by all the old musical people here, is believed to be the author of it.

“Andrew and his cutty gun.” The song to which this is set in the Museum is mine, and was composed on Miss Euphemia Murray, of Lintrose, commonly and deservedly called the Flower of Strathmore.

“How long and dreary is the night.” I met with some such words in a collection of songs somewhere, which I altered and enlarged; and, to please you, and to suit your favorite air, I have taken a stride or two across my room, and have arranged it anew, as you will find on the other page:—

Tune—“*Cauld Kail in Aberdeen.*”

I.

How lang and dreary is the night,
When I am frae my dearie;
I restless lie frae e'en to morn,
Though I were ne'er sae weary.
For oh! her lanely nights are lang;
And oh, her dreams are eerie;
And oh, her widow'd heart is sair,
That's absent frae her dearie.

II.

When I think on the lightsome days
I spent wi' thee, my dearie;
And now what seas between us roar—
How can I be but eerie?

III.

How slow ye move, ye heavy hours;
The joyless day how dreary!
It was na sae ye glinted by,
When I was wi' my dearie.

For oh ! her lanely nights are lang ;
 And oh, her dreams are eerie ;
 And oh, her widow'd heart issair,
 That's absent frae her dearie.

Tell me how you like this. I differ from your idea of the expression of the tune. There is, to me, a great deal of tenderness in it. You cannot, in my opinion dispense with a bass to your addenda airs. A lady of my acquaintance, a noted performer, plays and sings at the same time so charmingly, that I shall never bear to see any of her songs sent into the world, as naked as Mr. What-d'ye-call-um (Ritson) has done in his London collection.

These English songs gravel me to death. I have not that command of the language that I have of my native tongue. I have been at "Duncan Gray," to dress it in English, but all I can do is deplorably stupid. For instance:—

Tune—"Duncan Gray."

I.

LET not woman e'er complain
 Of inconstancy in love ;
 Let not woman e'er complain
 Fickle man is apt to rove :
 Look abroad through nature's range,
 Nature's mighty law is change ;
 Ladies, would it not be strange
 Man should then a monster prove ?

II.

Mark the winds, and mark the skies ;
 Ocean's ebb, and ocean's flow :
 Sun and moon but set to rise,
 Round and round the seasons go :

Why then ask of silly man
 To oppose great nature's plan?
 We'll be constant while we can—
 You can be no more, you know.

Since the above, I have been out in the country, taking a dinner with a friend, where I met with the lady whom I mentioned in the second page of this odds-and-ends of a letter. As usual, I got into song; and, returning home, I composed the following :—

THE LOVER'S MORNING SALUTE TO HIS MISTRESS.

Tune—" *Deil tak the Wars.*"

I.

SLEEP'ST thou, or wak'st thou, fairest creature?

Rosy morn now lifts his eye,
 Numbering ilka bud which nature
 Waters wi' the tears o' joy :
 Now through the leafy woods,
 And by the reeking floods,

Wild nature's tenants freely, gladly stray ;

The lintwhite in his bower
 Chants o'er the breathing flower ;
 The lav'rock to the sky
 Ascends wi' sangs o' joy,

While the sun and thou arise to bless the day.

II.

Phœbus gilding the brow o' morning,

Banishes ilk darksome shade,
 Nature gladdening and adorning ;
 Such to me my lovely maid.

When absent frae my fair,
 The murky shades o' care

With startless gloom o'er cast my sullen sky ;

But when, in beauty's light,
 She meets my ravish'd sight,

When thro' my very heart
 Her beaming glories dart—
 'Tis then I wake to life, to light, and joy.

If you honor my verses by setting the air to them, I will vamp up the old song, and make it English enough to be understood.

I enclose you a musical curiosity, an East Indian air, which you would swear was a Scottish one. I know the authenticity of it, as the gentleman who brought it over is a particular acquaintance of mine. Do preserve me the copy I send you, as it is the only one I have. Clarke has set a bass to it, and I intend putting it into the Musical Museum.

I would be obliged to you if you would procure me a sight of Ritson's collection of English songs, which you mention in your letter. I will thank you for another information, and that as speedily as you please—whether this miserable drawling hotch-potch epistle has not completely tired you of my correspondence?

[The despairing swain in "Saw ye my Phely" is said to have been Stephen Clarke, musician. The lady whom he persuaded the Poet to accuse of coldness and inconstancy was Phillis M'Murdo. His fantastic woes only excited a smile on her part: nor could they be welcome to a family where he had been introduced as a teacher. Musicians have sometimes fiddled and lira-lira-la'd themselves into the affections of high-born dames. The air to which these verses were composed took its name from a song of considerable merit beginning thus:—

"O when she came ben she bobbit fu' law,
 And when she came ben she bobbit fu' law,
 When she came ben, she kissed Cockpen,
 And then denied that she did it at a'.

'O never look down my lassie ava,
 O never look down my lassie ava,
 Thy coatie and sark are thy ain hands wark
 And Lady Jane's sel was never sae braw."

The earlier version of "How long and dreary is the night," will be found at page 299 of volume II.: the measure is different as well as many of the lines, and it is directed to be sung to a Gaelic air. Both songs are simple and affecting. "Donocht-Head," which the Poet praises so highly, was written by a gentleman, now dead, of the name of Pickering, who lived at Newcastle. There are some who still believe it to be by Burns himself, I know not on what grounds, except that it is equally natural and original:

"Keen blows the wind o'er Donocht-Head,
The snaw drives snelly thro' the dale,
The Gaber-lunzie tirls my sneck,
And shivering tells his waefu' tale.
Cauld is the night, O let me in,
And dinna let your minstrel fa',
And dinna let his winding-sheet
Be naething but a wreath o' snaw.

"Full ninety winters hae I seen,
And pip'd where gor-cocks whirring flew,
And mony a day y've danc'd I ween
To tilts which from my drone I blew.
My Eppie waked, and soon she cry'd,
Get up guidman, and let him in;
For weel ye ken the winter night
Was short when he began his din.

"Come in, auld carl, I'll steer my fire,
I'll make it bleeze a bonnie flame;
Your bluid is thin, ye've tint the gate,
Ye should na stray sae far frae hame.—
Nae hame have I, the minstrel said,
Sad party strife o'erturned my ha';
And weeping at the eve of life,
I wander thro' a wreath o' snaw."

The Poet has himself, in part, intimated the origin of the song to Chloris.—"He sat sae late and drank sae stout," at his friend's house, that the morning sun rose on him on his way home, and suggested these verses to his excited fancy. The complicated measure has communicated a labored-like air to the stanzas: they are full, however, of truth and nature: they were favorites with the Poet—from the trouble which they cost him, perhaps—his manuscript affords sundry variations:—

"Now to the streaming fountain,
Or up the heathy mountain,
The hart, hind, and roe freely, wildly-wanton stray;
In twining hazel bowers
His lay the linnet pours:
The lav'rock, &c.

“When frae my Chloris parted,
 Sad, cheerless, broken-hearted,
 Then night’s gloomy shade, cloudy, dark, o’ercast my sky :
 But when she charms my sight,
 In pride of beauty’s light ;
 When thro’ my very heart
 Her beaming glories dart,
 ’Tis then, ’tis then I wake to life and joy.”—ED.]

No. LXI.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, October 27, 1794.

I AM sensible, my dear friend, that a genuine poet can no more exist without his mistress than his meat. I wish I knew the adorable she, whose bright eyes and witching smiles have so often enraptured the Scottish bard, that I might drink her sweet health when the toast is going round. “Craigie-burn Wood” must certainly be adopted into my family, since she is the object of the song ; but, in the name of decency, I must beg a new chorus verse from you. “O to be lying beyond thee, dearie,” is, perhaps, a consummation to be wished, but will not do for singing in the company of ladies. The songs in your last will do you lasting credit, and suit the respective airs charmingly. I am perfectly of your opinion with respect to the additional airs : the idea of sending them into the world naked as they were born was ungenerous. They must all be clothed and made decent by our friend Clarke.

I find I am anticipated by the friendly Cunningham in sending you Ritson’s Scottish Collection. Permit me, therefore, to present you with his English Collection, which you will receive by the coach. I do not find his historical essay on Scottish song interesting. Your anecdotes and miscellaneous remarks will, I am sure, be much more so. Allan has just sketched a

charming design from "Maggie Lauder." She is dancing with such spirit as to electrify the piper, who seems almost dancing too, while he is playing with the most exquisite glee. I am much inclined to get a small copy, and to have it engraved in the style of Ritson's prints.

P. S. Pray what do your anecdotes say concerning "Maggie Lauder"? Was she a real personage, and of what rank? You would surely "spier for her, if you ca'd at Anstruther town."

[Of Maggie Lauder much has been written by annotators, but no light has been thrown upon either her birth-place or her station: she is likely a creation of the minstrel muse, and belongs to the imagination. The mind of the world is essentially prosaic; it loves truth, and rejoices to find that sometimes the characters which fiction presents are derived from originals of flesh and blood. The greater proportion are, nevertheless, ideal; and it is the greatest test, as well as triumph of genius, to pass them as real. How many rustic farmers have contended for the honor of sitting for Dandie Dinmont! several are still pointed out as the prototypes of Tam O'Shanter; and, on walking down the Minories, one cannot help looking from side to side for the sign of Isaac Rapine, the money-broker. These are the victories achieved by genius. Maggie Lauder has lately obtained a longer lease of life at the hands of a northern poet. She is the heroine in Tennant's Anster Fair, a poem of great originality as well as force—the forerunner of what has been called the Beppo school of verse.—ED.]

No. LXII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

November, 1794.

MANY thanks to you, my dear Sir, for your present: it is a book of the utmost importance to me. I have yesterday begun my anecdotes, &c., for your work. I intend drawing it up in the form of a letter to you,

which will save me from the tedious dull business of systematic arrangement. Indeed, as all I have to say consists of unconnected remarks, anecdotes, scraps of old songs, &c., it would be impossible to give the work a beginning, a middle, and an end, which the critics insist to be absolutely necessary in a work. In my last I told you my objections to the song you had selected for "My lodging is on the cold ground." On my visit the other day to my fair Chloris (that is the poetic name of the lovely goddess of my inspiration), she suggested an idea which I, in my return from the visit, wrought into the following song :

CHLORIS.

I.

My Chloris, mark how green the groves,
The primrose banks how fair :
The balmy gales awake the flowers,
And wave thy flaxen hair.

II.

The lav'rock shuns the palace gay,
And o'er the cottage sings :
For nature smiles as sweet, I ween,
To shepherds as to kings.

III.

Let minstrels sweep the skilfu' string
In lordly lighted ha' :
The shepherd stops his simple reed,
Blithe, in the birken shaw.

IV.

The princely revel may survey
Our rustic dance wi' scorn ;
But are their hearts as light as ours,
Beneath the milk-white thorn ?

V.

The shepherd, in the flow'ry glen,

In shepherd's praise will woo :

The courtier tells a finer tale—

But is his heart as true ?

VI.

These wild-wood flowers I've pu'd, to deck

That spotless breast o' thine :

The courtier's gems may witness love—

But 'tis na love like mine.

How do you like the simplicity and tenderness of this pastoral ?—I think it pretty well.

I like you for entering so candidly and so kindly into the story of "*ma chere Amie*." I assure you, I was never more in earnest in my life than in the account of that affair which I sent you in my last. Conjugal love is a passion which I deeply feel, and highly venerate ; but, somehow, it does not make such a figure in poesy, as that other species of the passion,

"Where Love is Liberty, and Nature law."

Musically speaking, the first is an instrument of which the gamut is scanty and confined, but the tones inexpressibly sweet ; while the last has powers equal to all the intellectual modulations of the human soul. Still, I am a very poet in my enthusiasm of the passion. The welfare and happiness of the beloved object is the first and inviolate sentiment that pervades my soul ; and whatever pleasure I might wish for, or whatever might be the raptures they would give me, yet, if they interfere with that first principle, it is having these pleasures at a dishonest price ; and justice forbids, and generosity disdains the purchase !

Despairing of my own powers to give you variety enough in English songs, I have been turning over old collections, to pick out songs of which the measure is something similar to what I want ; and with a

little alteration, so as to suit the rhythm of the air exactly, to give you them for your work. Where the songs have hitherto been but little noticed, nor have ever been set to music, I think the shift a fair one. A song, which, under the same first verse, you will find in Ramsay's Tea-table Miscellany, I have cut down for an English dress to your "Dainty Davie," as follows:—

CHLOE.

I.

It was the charming month of May,
 When all the flowers were fresh and gay,
 One morning, by the break of day,
 The youthful, charming Chloe
 From peaceful slumber she arose,
 Girt on her mantle and her hose,
 And o'er the flowery mead she goes,
 The youthful, charming Chloe.
 Lovely was she by the dawn,
 Youthful Chloe, charming Chloe,
 Tripping o'er the pearly lawn,
 The youthful, charming Chloe.

II.

The feather'd people you might see,
 Perch'd all around, on every tree,
 In notes of sweetest melody
 They hail the charming Chloe;
 Till, painting gay the eastern skies,
 The glorious sun began to rise,
 Out-rivall'd by the radiant eyes
 Of youthful, charming Chloe.
 Lovely was she by the dawn,
 Youthful Chloe, charming Chloe,
 Tripping o'er the pearly lawn,
 The youthful, charming Chloe.

You may think meanly of this, but take a look at

the bombast original, and you will be surprised that I have made so much of it. I have finished my song to "*Rothemurche's Rant*;" and you have Clarke to consult, as to the set of the air for singing:—

LASSIE WI' THE LINT-WHITE LOCKS.

Tune—" *Rothemurche's Rant*."

I.

LASSIE wi' the lint-white locks,
Bonnie lassie, artless lassie,
Wilt thou wi' me tent the flocks?
Wilt thou be my dearie, O?
Now nature cleeds the flowery lea,
And a' is young and sweet like thee;
O wilt thou share its joy wi' me,
And say thou'lt be my dearie, O?

II.

And when the welcome simmer-shower
Has cheer'd ilk drooping little flower,
We'll to the breathing woodbine bower
At sultry noon, my dearie, O.

III.

When Cynthia lights, wi' silver ray,
The weary shearer's hameward way;
Thro' yellow-waving fields we'll stray,
And talk o' love, my dearie, O.

IV.

And when the howling wintry blast
Disturbs my lassie's midnight rest;
Enclasped to my faithfu' breast,
I'll comfort thee, my dearie, O.
Lassie wi' the lint-white locks,
Bonnie lassie, artless lassie,
Wilt thou wi' me tent the flocks?
Wilt thou be my dearie, O?

This piece has at least the merit of being a regular pastoral: the vernal morn, the summer noon, the autumnal evening, and the wintry night, are regularly rounded. If you like it, well: if not, I will insert it in the Museum.

[Burns is the most outspoken of all poets: he is not satisfied with writing the most natural and impassioned songs in the compass of our literature: he must tell us of the stream banks along which he mused, and name the very ladies whose looks he invoked to aid his inspiration. The lenient and the mild are willing to perceive in these disclosures the secrets of song-making alone: while the rigid and stern regard them as the words of one, who under pretence of poetic study played the libertine. It is difficult to decide in a matter so delicate: it is said that the wife of Nollekens was of a disposition so jealous, that she would not allow him to have living models to finish his fancy figures by; and as the sculptor could not imagine what he did not see, he was compelled to desist from the manufacture of Venuses and Graces. In like manner, there are some poets who write best from what they see: they look, and talk, and think till their feelings and fancy rise into the region of poesie, and then empty their hearts in the verse. There are others in whose imaginations eternal beauty resides, and who have no occasion to kindle themselves up by the presence of living loveliness. Burns seems to have belonged to the former class: not but that beauty had a permanent abode in his fancy, but the excitement which the voice and looks of woman occasioned, saved him the trouble of drawing upon his imagination. He has explained this in one of his best songs:—

“I see thee dancing on the green,
Thy waist sae jimp, thy limbs sae clean,
Thy tempting lip and roguish een—
By heaven and earth, I love thee!

This is a fine burst of admiration—he kindles more and more every line, till he can endure to gaze no longer on limb, and lip, and eye, and exclaims

“By heaven and earth, I love thee!”

Those acquainted with the Poet's life and habits of study will perceive much of both in the sweet song of “Lassie wi' the lint-white locks.” Dumfries is a small town; a few steps car-

ried Burns to green lanes, daisied brae-sides, and quiet stream-banks. Men returning from labor were sure to meet him "all under the light of the moon," sauntering forth as if he had no aim; his hands behind his back, his hat turned up a little behind by the shortness of his neck, and noting all, yet seeming to note nothing. Yet those who got near without being seen, might hear him humming some old Scottish air, and fitting verses to it—the scene and the season supplying the imagery, and the Jeans, the Nancies, the Phelies, and the Jessies of his admiration furnishing bright eyes, white hands, and waving tresses, as the turn of the song required. In some of the copies of this lyric the last verse runs thus:—

"And should the howling wintry blast
Disturb my lassie's midnight rest,
I'll fauld thee to my faithful breast,
And comfort thee, my dearie, O!"—ED.]

No. LXIII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

I AM out of temper that you should set so sweet, so tender an air, as "Deil tak the Wars," to the foolish old verses. You talk of the silliness of "Saw ye my Father:" by heavens, the odds is, gold to brass! Besides, the od song, though now pretty well modernized into the Scottish language, is originally, and in the early editions, a bungling low imitation of the Scottish manner, by that genius Tom D'Urfey; so has no pretensions to be a Scottish production. There is a pretty English song by Sheridan, in the "Duenna," to this air, which is out of sight superior to D'Urfey's. It begins—

"When sable night each drooping plant restoring."

The air, if I understand the expression of it properly, is the very native language of simplicity, tenderness, and love. I have again gone over my song to the tune, as follows.*

* See the "Lover's Morning Salute to his Mistress." Our bard remarks upon it, "I could easily throw this into an English mould;

Now for my English song to "Nancy's to the Greenwood," &c. :—

FAREWELL THOU STREAM.

I.

FAREWELL thou stream that winding flows
 Around Eliza's dwelling!
 O mem'ry! spare the cruel throes
 Within my bosom swelling:
 Condemn'd to drag a hopeless chain,
 And yet in secret languish,
 To feel a fire in ev'ry vein,
 Nor dare disclose my anguish.

II.

Love's veriest wretch, unseen, unknown,
 I fain my griefs would cover:
 The bursting sigh, th' unweeting groan,
 Betray the hapless lover.
 I know thou doom'st me to despair,
 Nor wilt, nor can'st relieve me;
 But oh, Eliza, hear one prayer—
 For pity's sake forgive me!

III.

The music of thy voice I heard,
 Nor wist while it enslav'd me;
 I saw thine eyes, yet nothing fear'd,
 'Till fears no more had sav'd me:
 The unwary sailor thus aghast,
 The wheeling torrent viewing;
 'Mid circling horrors sinks at last
 In overwhelming ruin.

but, to my taste, in the simp'e and the tender of the pastoral song,
 a sprinkling of the old Scottish has an inimitable effect."—CURRIE.

There is an air, "The Caledonian Hunt's Delight," to which I wrote a song that you will find in Johnson.—"Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon;" this air, I think, might find a place among your hundred, as Lear says of his knights. Do you know the history of the air? It is curious enough. A good many years ago, Mr. James Miller, writer in your good town,—a gentleman whom, possibly, you know—was in company with our friend Clarke; and talking of Scottish music, Miller expressed an ardent ambition to be able to compose a Scots air. Mr. Clarke, partly by way of joke, told him to keep to the black keys of the harpsichord, and preserve some kind of rhythm, and he would infallibly compose a Scots air. Certain it is, that, in a few days, Mr. Miller produced the rudiments of an air, which Mr. Clarke, with some touches and corrections, fashioned into the tune in question. Ritson, you know, has the same story of the black keys; but this account which I have just given you, Mr. Clarke informed me of several years ago. Now, to show you how difficult it is to trace the origin of our airs, I have heard it repeatedly asserted that this was an Irish air; nay, I met with an Irish gentleman who affirmed he had heard it in Ireland among the old women; while, on the other hand, a Countess informed me, that the first person who introduced the air into this country was a baronet's lady of her acquaintance, who took down the notes from an itinerant piper in the Isle of Man. How difficult, then, to ascertain the truth respecting our poesy and music! I, myself, have lately seen a couple of ballads sung through the streets of Dumfries, with my name at the head of them as the author, though it was the first time I had ever seen them.

I thank you for admitting "Craigie-burn Wood," and I shall take care to furnish you with a new chorus. In fact, the chorus was not my work, but a part of of some old verses to the air. If I can catch

myself in a more than ordinarily propitious moment, I shall write a new "Craigie-burn Wood" altogether. My heart is much in the theme.

I am ashamed, my dear fellow, to make the request; 'tis dunning your generosity; but, in a moment when I had forgotten whether I was rich or poor, I promised Chloris a copy of your songs. It wrings my honest pride to write you this, but an ungracious request is doubly so by a tedious apology. To make you some amends, as soon as I have extracted the necessary information out of them, I will return you Ritson's volumes.

The lady is not a little proud that she is to make so distinguished a figure in your collection, and I am not a little proud that I have it in my power to please her so much. Lucky it is for your patience that my paper is done, for when I am in a scribbling humor, I know not when to give over.

[Scott has observed, in the songs of Burns written at this period, a certain monotony, arising from his being called upon to fill up the craving void of lyric verse, in the publications of Johnson and Thomson.—"There is sufficient evidence," says Sir Walter, "that even the genius of Burns could not support him in the monotonous task of writing love verses on heaving bosoms and sparkling eyes, and twisting them into such rhythmical forms as might suit the capricious evolutions of Scotch reels and strathspeys. Let no one suppose that we undervalue the songs of Burns. When his soul was intent on suiting a favorite air with words, humorous or tender, as the subject demanded, no poet of our tongue ever displayed higher skill in marrying melody to immortal verse. But the writing a series of songs for large musical collections, degenerated into a slavish labor which no talents could support—led to negligence—and, above all, diverted the Poet from his grand plan of dramatic composition." The remarks of Scott apply forcibly to the song of "Farewell the stream that winding flows." His thoughts, perhaps unwittingly, wandered to the works of other lyrists, and the first verse reminds us of Hamilton's exquisite song, which he had already made the object of his imitation:—

“ Ah! the poor shepherd’s mournful fate,
When doom’d to love, and doom’d to languish;
To bear the scornful fair one’s hate,
Nor dare disclose his anguish.”

For the sake of affording variety, Burns had recourse to imitation, whereas he formerly wrote more directly from the overflowing fulness of his own heart.

Chloris, it is said, was so pleased to see herself reflected in verse and associated with the genius of Burns, that she showed the works of Thomson to her friends or admirers; and, as they were not few, it soon became publicly known that her flaxen locks, blue eyes, and “passing pleasing tongue” would communicate new charms to northern song. This it seems gave some offence to the more staid and stately of the Poet’s friends: they remonstrated with him—not on the impropriety of resorting to the beauty of a farmer’s daughter to bestow grace or tenderness on his strains, but because he had given her copies of his songs both in manuscript and print, which, in the careless gaiety of her nature, she exhibited to the world. The Poet saw that he had acted imprudently; a mutual friend was employed to reclaim the manuscripts: the lady gave them up with reluctance, but retained, and perhaps, still retains, the work of Thomson.—ED.]

No. LXIV.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

15th November, 1794.

MY GOOD SIR,

SINCE receiving your last, I have had another interview with Mr. Clarke, and a long consultation. He thinks the “Caledonian Hunt” is more Bacchanalian than amorous in its nature, and recommends it to you to match the air accordingly. Pray did it ever occur to you how peculiarly well the Scottish airs are adapted for verses in the form of a dialogue? The first part of the air is generally low, and suited for a man’s voice, and the second part in many instances cannot be sung, at concert pitch, but by a female voice. A

song, thus performed, makes an agreeable variety, but few of ours are written in this form: I wish you would think of it in some of those that remain. The only one of the kind you have sent me is admirable, and will be an universal favorite.

Your verses for "Rothemurche" are so sweetly pastoral, and your serenade to Chloris, for "Deil tak the Wars," so passionately tender, that I have sung myself into raptures with them. Your song for "My lodging is on the cold ground," is likewise a diamond of the first water; I am quite dazzled and delighted with it. Some of your Chlorises, I suppose, have flaxen hair, from your partiality for this color; else we differ about it; for I should scarcely conceive a woman to be a beauty, on reading that she had lint-white locks!

"Farewell thou stream that winding flows," I think excellent, but it is much too serious to come after "Nancy:" at least it would seem an incongruity to provide the same air with merry Scottish, and melancholy English verses! The more that the two sets of verses resemble each other in their general character, the better. Those you have manufactured for "Dainty Davie" will answer charmingly. I am happy to find you have begun your anecdotes: I care not how long they be, for it is impossible that any thing from your pen can be tedious. Let me beseech you not to use ceremony in telling me when you wish to present any of your friends with the songs: the next carrier will bring you three copies, and you are as welcome to twenty as to a pinch of snuff.

[The anecdotes promised by the Poet were but in part written; a rich treat has thus been lost to all his admirers. He would have given us a chapter on the human heart, informed us of the various feelings and impulses under which he wrote his lyrics—the hour and the season in which they were produced—

the walks in which he mused, and the heroines who lent look and life to the strains. Of each we would have known as much as we do of Highland Mary; nor could this have been otherwise than acceptable to the ladies themselves. We have been left to tradition, or conjecture, or accidental intimations; and the honor done to the charms of one has, we fear, sometimes been conferred on another. The Poet wrote notes of another kind on Johnson's Museum: these will be found in a future volume. They are at once old and new, serious and comic, full of anecdotes and scraps of quaint and curious song, and marked everywhere with that peculiar spirit and feeling which distinguished Burns amongst all the sons of Caledonia.—ED.]

No. LXV.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

19th November, 1794.

YOU see, my dear Sir, what a punctual correspondent I am; though indeed you may thank yourself for the tedium of my letters, as you have so flattered me on my horsemanship with my favorite hobby, and have praised the grace of his ambling so much, that I am scarcely ever off his back. For instance, this morning, though a keen blowing frost, in my walk before breakfast, I finished my duet, which you were pleased to praise so much. Whether I have uniformly succeeded, I will not say; but here it is for you, though it is not an hour old:—

O PHILLY, HAPPY BE THAT DAY.

Tune—"The Sow's Tail."

HE.

O PHILLY, happy be that day,
When roving through the gather'd hay,
My youthfu' heart was stown away,
And by thy charms, my Philly.

SHE.

O Willy, ay I bless the grove
Where first I own'd my maiden love,
Whilst thou didst pledge the powers above,
To be my ain dear Willy.

HE.

As songsters of the early year
Are ilka day mair sweet to hear,
So ilka day to me mair dear
And charming is my Philly.

SHE.

As on the brier the budding rose
Still richer breathes and fairer blows,
So in my tender bosom grows
The love I bear my Willy.

HE.

The milder sun and bluer sky,
That crown my harvest cares wi' joy,
Were ne'er sae welcome to my eye
As is a sight o' Philly.

SHE.

The little swallow's wanton wing,
Tho' wafting o'er the flowery spring,
Did ne'er to me sic tidings bring,
As meeting o' my Willy.

HE.

The bee that thro' the sunny hour
Sips nectar in the opening flower,
Compar'd wi' my delight is poor,
Upon the lips o' Philly.

SHE.

The woodbine in the dewy weet,
When evening shades in silence meet,
Is nocht sae fragrant or sae sweet
As is a kiss o' Willy.

HE.

Let fortune's wheel at random rin,
 And fools may tyne, and knaves may win ;
 My thoughts are a' bound up in ane,
 And that's my ain dear Philly.

SHE.

What's a' the joys that gowd can gie !
 I care na wealth a single flie ;
 The lad I love's the lad for me,
 And that's my ain dear Willy.

Tell me, honestly, how you like it ; and point out whatever you think faulty.

I am much pleased with your idea of singing our songs in alternate stanzas, and regret that you did not hint it to me sooner. In those that remain I shall have it in my eye. I remember your objections to the name, Philly ; but it is the common abbreviation of Phillis. Sally, the only other name that suits, has, to my ear, a vulgarity about it, which unfits it for any thing except burlesque. The legion of Scottish poetasters of the day, whom your brother editor, Mr. Ritson, ranks with me, as my coëvals, have always mistaken vulgarity for simplicity : whereas simplicity is as much *éloignée* from vulgarity, on the one hand, as from affected point and puerile conceit on the other.

I agree with you, as to the air "Craigie-burn Wood," that a chorus would, in some degree, spoil the effect ; and shall certainly have none in my projected song to it. It is not, however, a case in point with "Rothemurche ;" there, as in "Roy's Wife of Aldivalloch," a chorus goes, to my taste, well enough. As to the chorus going first, that is the case with "Roy's Wife" as well as "Rothemurche." In fact, in the first part of both tunes, the rhythm is so peculiar and irregular, and on that irregularity depends so much of their

beauty, that we must e'en take them with all their wildness, and humor the verse accordingly. Leaving out the starting-note in both tunes has, I think, an effect that no regularity could counterbalance the want of:—

Try,	{ O <i>Roy's</i> Wife of Aldivalloch.
and	{ O <i>Lassie</i> wi' the lint-white locks.
compare with	{ <i>Roy's</i> Wife of Aldivalloch.
	{ <i>Lassie</i> wi' the lint-white locks.

Does not the tameness of the prefixed syllable strike you? In the last case, with the true furor of genius, you strike at once into the wild originality of the air; whereas in the first insipid method, it is like the grating screw of the pins before the fiddle is brought into tune. This is my taste; if I am wrong I beg pardon of the *cognoscenti*.

"The Caledonian Hunt" is so charming, that it would make any subject in a song go down; but pathos is certainly its native tongue. Scottish Bacchanalians we certainly want, though the few we have are excellent. For instance, "Todlin Hame" is for wit and humor, an unparalleled composition; and "Andrew and his cutty Gun" is the work of a master. By the way, are you not quite vexed to think that those men of genius, for such they certainly were, who composed our fine Scottish lyrics, should be unknown? It has given me many a heart-ache. Apropos to Bacchanalian songs in Scottish; I composed one yesterday, for an air I like much—"Lumps o' pudding."

CONTENTED WI' LITTLE.

Tune—"Lumps o' Pudding."

I.

CONTENTED wi' little, and cantie wi' mair,
Whene'er I forgather wi' sorrow and care,
I gie them a skelp, as they're creepin alang,
Wi' a cog o' guid swats, and an auld Scottish sang.

II.

I whyles claw the elbow o' troublesome thought;
 But man is a sodger, and life is a faught:
 My mirth and guid humor are coin in my pouch,
 And my freedom's my lairdship nae monarch dare touch.

III.

A towmond o' trouble, should that be my fa',
 A night o' guid fellowship sowthers it a':
 When at the blithe end o' our journey at last,
 Wha the deil ever thinks o' the road he has past?

IV.

Blind chance, let her snapper and stoyte on her way;
 Be't to me, be't frae me, e'en let the jade gae:
 Come ease, or come travail; come pleasure or pain;
 My warst word is—"Welcome, and welcome again!"

If you do not relish the air, I will send it to Johnson.

[Pastoral verse exhibits many examples of the dramatic mode of composition: compliments and scorn, praise and censure, are bandied about by shepherds and shepherdesses, till the subject-matter is exhausted. In like manner, Willy and Philly in this lyric carry on the pleasant strife of compliment, till flowery comparisons grow scant and the lovers are reduced to silence. Phillis is a favorite in northern song: in the present instance it is the true name of the heroine. Some of our dramatic songs are humorous and full of life:—

"Gude'en to you, kimmer,
 And how do you fare?
 A pint o' the best o't,
 And twa pints mair.
 Gude'en to you, kimmer,
 And how do you do?
 Hic, hiccup, quo' the kimmer,
 Better that I'm fou."

One of the happiest examples of free wit and humor may be found in the "Auld Gudeman:"—

HE.

“The auld gudeman that thou tells of,
 The country kens where he was born,
 Was but a silly poor vagabond,
 And ilka ane leugh him to scorn :
 For he did spend, and make an end
 Of gear that his forefathers wan ;
 He gart the poor stand frae the door,—
 Sae tell nae mair o’ thy auld gudeman.

SHE.

“My heart alake is liken to break,
 When I think on my winsome John :
 His blinkan e’e and gate sae free,
 Was naething like thee, thou dos and drone.
 His rosie cheek and flaxen hair,
 And a skin as white as onie swan,
 Was large and tall, and comely withal,
 And thou’lt never be like my auld gudeman.”

Tradition has recorded that Burns wrote “Contented wi’ little” in a moment of hope, when fortune seemed inclined to pause in her persecution, and the frozen finger of the Excise pointed to the situation of supervisor. Yet hope did not hinder him from thinking of independence, even while keeping sorrow and care at bay with a cup and song : he forgot not that his freedom was a “lairdship nae monarch dare touch.” Of songs which honor fireside happiness and domestic felicity, we have but few, compared with those which treat of love and wine ; yet of these some are truly excellent : and, among the latter, who can refuse to include

“Contented wi’ little and cantie wi’ mair !”—ED.]

No. LXVI.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

SINCE yesterday’s penmanship, I have framed a couple of English stanzas, by way of an English song to “Roy’s Wife.” You will allow me, that in this instance, my English corresponds in sentiment with the Scottish :—

CANST THOU LEAVE ME THUS.

Tune—"Roy's Wife."

I.

CANST thou leave me thus, my Katy?
 Canst thou leave me thus, my Katy?
 Well thou know'st my aching heart—
 And canst thou leave me thus for pity?
 Is this thy plighted, fond regard,
 Thus cruelly to part, my Katy?
 Is this thy faithful swain's reward—
 An aching, broken heart, my Katy?

II.

Farewell! and ne'er such sorrows tear
 That fickle heart of thine, my Katy!
 Thou may'st find those will love thee dear—
 But not a love like mine, my Katy!
 Canst thou leave me thus, my Katy?
 Canst thou leave me thus, my Katy?
 Well thou knowest my aching heart—
 And canst thou leave me thus for pity?

Well! I think this, to be done in two or three turns across my room, and with two or three pinches of Irish blackguard, is not so far amiss. You see I am determined to have my quantum of applause from somebody.

Tell my friend Allan (for I am sure that we only want the trifling circumstance of being known to one another, to be the best friends on earth) that I much suspect he has, in his plates, mistaken the figure of the stock and horn. I have at least gotten one; but it is a very rude instrument: it is composed of three parts; the stock, which is the hinder thigh-bone of a sheep, such as you see in a mutton-ham; the horn, which is a common Highland cow's horn, cut off at the

smaller end, until the aperture be large enough to admit the stock to be pushed up through the horn, until it be held by the thicker end of the thigh-bone ; and lastly, an oaten reed exactly cut and notched like that which you see every shepherd-boy have, when the corn-stems are green and full-grown. The reed is not made fast in the bone, but is held by the lips, and plays loose in the smaller end of the stock ; while the stock, with the horn hanging on its larger end, is held by the hands in playing. The stock has six or seven ventiges on the upper side, and one back-ventige, like the common flute. This of mine was made by a man from the braes of Athole, and is exactly what the shepherds wont to use in that country.

However, either it is not quite properly bored in the holes, or else we have not the art of blowing it rightly ; for we can make little of it. If Mr. Allan chooses, I will send him a sight of mine ; as I look on myself to be a kind of brother-brush with him. “Pride in poets is nae sin,” and, I will say it, that I look on Mr. Allan and Mr. Burns to be the only genuine and real painters of Scottish costume in the world.

[To this address in the character of a forsaken lover, a reply was found on the part of the lady, among the MSS. of Burns, evidently in a female handwriting. The temptation to give it to the public is irresistible ; and if in so doing offence should be given to the fair authoress, the beauty of her verses must plead our excuse :—

Tune—“*Roy's Wife.*”

“Stay my Willie—yet believe me,
 Stay my Willie—yet believe me,
 For, ah ! thou know'st na' every pang
 Wad wring my bosom, shouldst thou leave me.
 Tell me that thou yet art true,
 And a' my wrongs shall be forgiven,
 And when this heart proves fause to thee,
 Yon sun shall cease its course in heaven.

“But to think I was betrayed,
That falsehood e’er our love should sunder!
To take the flow’ret to my breast,
And find the guilefu’ serpent under.

“Could I hope thou’dst ne’er deceive,
Celestial pleasures, might I choose ’em,
I’d slight, nor seek in other spheres
That heaven I’d find within thy bosom.
Stay, my Willie—yet believe me,
Stay, my Willie—yet believe me,
For, ah! thou know’st na’ every pang
Wad wring my bosom, should’st thou leave me.”

This reply was written by a young and beautiful Englishwoman—Mrs. Riddell. She alludes to her quarrel with the Poet: she took a flower to her bosom and found a serpent under. In that metaphorical way she intimated that the Poet had the presumption to attempt to salute her—a piece of forwardness which a coldness of two years’ continuance more than punished.—ED.]

No. LXVII.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

29th November, 1794.

I ACKNOWLEDGE, my dear Sir, you are not only the most punctual, but the most delectable correspondent I ever met with. To attempt flattering you, never entered my head; the truth is, I look back with surprise at my impudence, in so frequently nibbling at lines and couplets of your incomparable lyrics, for which, perhaps, if you had served me right, you would have sent me to the devil. On the contrary, however, you have, all along, condescended to invite my criticism with so much courtesy, that it ceases to be wonderful if I have sometimes given myself the airs of a reviewer. Your last budget demands unqualified praise: all the songs are charming, but the duet is a *chef d’œuvre*. “Lumps of pudding” shall certainly make one of my family dishes: you have cooked it so capitally that it

will please all palates. Do give us a few more of this cast, when you find yourself in good spirits: these convivial songs are more wanted than those of the amorous kind, of which we have great choice. Besides, one does not often meet with a singer capable of giving the proper effect to the latter, while the former are easily sung, and acceptable to every body. I participate in your regret that the authors of some of our best songs are unknown: it is provoking to every admirer of genius.

I mean to have a picture painted from your beautiful ballad, "The Soldier's Return," to be engraven for one of my frontispieces. The most interesting point of time appears to me, when she first recognises her ain dear Willie, "She gaz'd, she reddened like a rose." The three lines immediately following are, no doubt, more impressive on the reader's feelings; but were the painter to fix on these, then you'll observe the animation and anxiety of her countenance is gone, and he could only represent her fainting in the soldier's arms. But I submit the matter to you, and beg your opinion.

Allan desires me to thank you for your accurate description of the stock and horn, and for the very gratifying compliment you pay him, in considering him worthy of standing in a niche, by the side of Burns, in the Scottish Pantheon. He has seen the rude instrument you describe, so does not want you to send it; but wishes to know whether you believe it to have ever been generally used as a musical pipe by the Scottish shepherds, and when, and in what part of the country chiefly. I doubt much if it was capable of any thing but routing and roaring. A friend of mine says, he remembers to have heard one in his younger days (made of wood instead of your bone,) and that the sound was abominable.

Do not, I beseech you, return any books.

No. LXVIII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

December, 1794.

It is, I assure you, the pride of my heart to do any thing to forward, or add to the value of your book; and as I agree with you that the jacobite song in the Museum, to "There'll never be peace till Jamie comes home," would not so well consort with Peter Pindar's excellent love-song to that air, I have just framed for you the following:—

MY NANNIE'S AWA.

Tune—"There'll never be peace," &c.

I.

Now in her green mantle blithe nature arrays,
And listens the lambkins that bleat o'er the braes,
While birds warble welcome in ilka green shaw;
But to me it's delightless—my Nannie's awa!

II.

The snaw-drap and primrose our woodlands adorn,
And violets bathe in the weet o' the morn;
They pain my sad bosom, sae sweetly they blaw,
They mind me o' Nannie—and Nannie's awa!

III.

Thou lav'rock that springs frae the dews of the lawn,
The shepherd to warn o' the gray-breaking dawn,
And thou mellow mavis that hails the night fa',
Give over for pity—my Nannie's awa!

IV.

Come autumn, sae pensive, in yellow and gray,
And soothe me with tidings o' nature's decay:
The dark dreary winter, and wild driving snaw,
Alane can delight me—now Nannie's awa!

How does this please you?—As to the point of time for the expression, in your proposed print from my “Sodger’s Return,” it must certainly be at—“She gaz’d.” The interesting dubity and suspense taking possession of her countenance, and the gushing fondness, with a mixture of roguish playfulness in his, strike me as things of which a master will make a great deal.—In great haste, but in great truth, yours.

[Rumor says that Clarinda was the Nannie whose absence Burns laments in this pretty pastoral. His thoughts were often in Edinburgh. On festive occasions, when toasts were called for, Syme used to exclaim, “Come, we all know what Burns will give—here’s Mrs. Mac.” The laverock was a favorite bird with him; and many happy images it has supplied him with. It is, indeed, pleasant both to eye and ear to be out by gray daylight on a summer morning, when a thousand larks are ascending into the brightening air; the warblings of some are near, and the songsters may be seen a stone-throw high, mounting as they sing: others are unseen in the cloud; and the whole atmosphere is full of melody.

The sketch of the “Sodger’s Return,” by Allan, was comparatively a failure; the Poet intimated the right point of time; but to express suspense gushing fondness, and roguish playfulness was too much for the painter, and perhaps for his art. The five succeeding songs, compositions, it is believed, of this season, supply a short pause in the correspondence with Thomson, and show us what Burns was about during

“The mirk night o’ December.”—ED.]

O WHA IS SHE THAT LO’ES ME.

Tune—“*Morag.*”

I.

O WHA is she that lo’es me,
 And has my heart a-keeping?
 O sweet is she that lo’es me,
 As dews o’ simmer weeping,
 In tears the rose-buds steeping!

O that's the lassie o' my heart,
My lassie ever dearer ;
O that's the queen of womankind,
And ne'er a ane to peer her.

II.

If thou shalt meet a lassie
In grace and beauty charming,
That e'en thy chosen lassie,
Erewhile thy breast sae warming,
Had ne'er sic powers alarming.

III.

If thou hadst heard her talking,
And thy attentions plighted,
That ilka body talking,
But her by thee is slighted,
And thou art all delighted.

IV.

If thou hast met this fair one ;
When frae her thou hast parted
If every other fair one,
But her, thou hast deserted,
And thou art broken-hearted ;
O that's the lassie o' my heart,
My lassie ever dearer ;
O that's the queen o' womankind,
And ne'er a ane to peer her.

[Of the air of Morag the Poet was passionately fond ; yet it cannot be said that he was more than commonly successful in wedding it to words. The measure which the tune requires is cramp and difficult, and the sentiment is interrupted before it has well begun to flow. This song was found among the papers of Burns ; the exact period of its composition is not known, nor has the heroine been named.—ED.]

CALEDONIA.

Tune—" *Caledonian Hunt's Delight.*"

I.

THERE was once a day—but old Time then was
young—

That brave Caledonia, the chief of her line,
From some of your northern deities sprung,
(Who knows not that brave Caledonia's divine?)
From Tweed to the Orcades was her domain,
To hunt, or to pasture, or do what she would:
Her heav'nly relations there fixed her reign,
And pledg'd her their godheads to warrant it good.

II.

A lambkin in peace, but a lion in war,
The pride of her kindred the heroine grew:
Her grandsire, old Odin, triumphantly swore
"Whoe'er shall provoke thee, th' encounter shall
rue!"
With tillage or pasture at times she would sport,
To feed her fair flocks by her green rustling corn:
But chiefly the woods were her fav'rite resort,
Her darling amusement, the hounds and the horn.

III.

Long quiet she reign'd; till thitherward steers
A flight of bold eagles from Adria's strand:
Repeated, successive, for many long years,
They darken'd the air, and they plunder'd the land:
Their pounces were murder, and terror their cry,
They'd conquered and ruin'd a world beside;
She took to her hills, and her arrows let fly—
The daring invaders they fled or they died.

IV.

The fell harpy-raven took wing from the north,
The scourge of the seas, and the dread of the shore;
The wild Scandinavian boar issu'd forth
To wanton in carnage, and wallow in gore:

O'er countries and kingdoms their fury prevail'd,
 No arts could appease them, no arms could repel;
 But brave Caledonia in vain they assailed,
 As Largs well can witness, and Loncartie tell.

V.

The Cameleon-savage disturb'd her repose,
 With tumult, disquiet, rebellion, and strife;
 Provok'd beyond bearing, at last she arose,
 And robb'd him at once of his hopes and his life:
 The Anglian lion, the terror of France,
 Oft prowling, ensanguin'd the Tweed's silver flood:
 But, taught by the bright Caledonian lance,
 He learned to fear in his own native wood.

VI.

Thus bold, independent, unconquer'd, and free,
 Her bright course of glory for ever shall run:
 For brave Caledonia immortal must be;
 I'll prove it from Euclid, as clear as the sun:
 Rectangle-triangle, the figure we'll choose,
 The upright is Chance, and old Time is the base;
 But brave Caledonia's the hypotenuse;
 Then ergo, she'll match them, and match them
 always.

[There is both knowledge of history and elegance of allegory in this singular song; but the most remarkable part is the conclusion, where the Poet proves, by mathematical demonstration, the immortality of Caledonia. It was one of those pieces on which he set little store; but it may be observed of this as it has been remarked of others of his productions, that it bears the stamp of national love and of a manly understanding. Indeed, in the hastiest snatch he ever penned, some happy touch will be found denoting the hand of the master—some singular thought or felicitous line—easy to him and unattainable to others.—ED.]

O LAY THY LOOF IN MINE, LASS.

Tune—"Cordwainer's March."

I.

O LAY thy loof in mine, lass,
 In mine, lass, in mine, lass ;
 And swear on thy white hand, lass,
 That thou wilt be my ain.

A slave to love's unbounded sway,
 He aft has wrought me meikle wae ;
 But now he is my deadly fae,
 Unless thou be my ain.

II.

There's monie a lass has broke my rest,
 That for a blink I hae lo'ed best ;
 But thou art queen within my breast,
 Forever to remain.

O lay thy loof in mine, lass,
 In mine, lass, in mine, lass ;
 And swear on thy white hand, lass,
 That thou wilt be my ain.

[The air for which these verses were written is commonly played on King Crispin's day, when the shoemakers hold a sort of Saturnalia, and with pennons displayed, and trumpet and drum, march through our northern borough towns, attired like kings, princes of the blood, senators, ambassadors, and warriors. The spectacle is very imposing ; the "princes of a day" behave with wonderful decorum ; and, save that it is more orderly, it resembles closely a real coronation pageant. The gentle craft of Crispin has furnished matter for much verse, serious as well as sarcastic. If there be truth in song, Satan supplied the tools of Cromwell's soldiers, who instructed the folk of the north, in what Dr. Johnson calls "the art of accommodating men's feet with shoes :"—

"There came souters out o' Mar,
 And souters twice as far,
 And souters out o' Peterhead,
 Wi' no a tooth in a' their head,

Wi' rugging and tugging leather ;
 They came all in a flock together ;
 And auld King Crispin was there himsel',
 And he looked down to hell—
 Where he saw some barked leather to sell.
 Quo' he may I swing in a hair tether,
 But I'll gae down and price that leather.
 He gat down, I canna tell ye how,
 But when he came up he had a burnt mou'.
 He bouked nine pints o' oil and a little wax,
 Crooked gullies five or sax,
 And a foot-fang to hand them a' fast,
 There were inseam awls, and outseam awls,
 Wi' pegging awls and closing awls :
 And when he thought the foul fiend's a' gane,
 Up came a patie-boy and a sharpening-stane."

This singular old rhyme I heard repeated when a boy, by Andrew Graham, a mason, who lived on the border.—ED.]

THE FETE CHAMPETRE.

Tune—" *Killicrankie.* "

I.

O WHA will to Saint Stephen's house,
 To do our errands there, man ?
 O wha will to Saint Stephen's house,
 O' th' merry lads of Ayr, man ?
 Or will we send a man-o'-law ?
 Or will we send a sodger ?
 Or him wha led o'er Scotland a'
 The meikle Ursa-Major ?

II.

Come, will ye court a noble lord,
 Or buy a score o' lairds, man ?
 For worth and honor pawn their word,
 Their vote shall be Glencaird's, man ?
 Ane gies them coin, ane gies them wine,
 Anither gies them clatter ;
 Anbank, wha guess'd the ladies' taste,
 He gies a Fête Champetre.

III.

When Love and Beauty heard the news,
The gay green-woods amang, man ;
Where gathering flowers and busking bowers,
They heard the blackbird's sang, man ;
A vow, they seal'd it with a kiss
Sir Politics to fetter,
As their's alone, the patent-bliss,
To hold a Fête Champetre.

IV.

Then mounted Mirth, on gleesome wing,
O'er hill and dale she flew, man ;
Ilk wimpling burn, ilk crystal spring,
Ilk glen and shaw she knew, man :
She summon'd every social sprite,
That sports by wood or water,
On th' bonny banks of Ayr to meet,
And keep this Fête Champetre.

V.

Cauld Boreas, wi' his boisterous crew,
Were bound to stakes like kye, man ;
And Cynthia's car, o' silver fu',
Clamb up the starry sky, man :
Reflected beams dwell in the streams,
Or down the current shatter ;
The western breeze steals thro' the trees,
To view this Fête Champetre.

VI.

How many a robe sae gaily floats !
What sparkling jewels glance, man !
To Harmony's enchanting notes,
As moves the mazy dance, man.
The echoing wood, the winding flood,
Like Paradise did glitter,
When angels met, at Adam's yett,
To hold their Fête Champetre.

VII.

When Politics came there, to mix
 And make his ether-stane, man!
 He circled round the magic ground,
 But entrance found he nane, man:
 He blushed for shame, he quat his name,
 Forswore it, every letter,
 Wi' humble prayer to join and share
 This festive Fête Champetre.

[The occasion of this ballad was as follows :—when Mr. Cunningham, of Enterkin, came to his estate, two mansion houses on it, Enterkin and Anbank, were both in a ruinous state. Wishing to introduce himself with some *eclat* to the country, he got temporary erections made on the banks Ayr, tastefully decorated with shrubs and flowers, for a supper and ball, to which most of the respectable families in the county were invited. It was a novelty in the county, and attracted much notice. A dissolution of parliament was soon expected, and this festivity was thought to be an introduction to a canvass for representing the county. Several other candidates were spoken of, particularly Sir John Whitefoord, then residing at Cloncaird, commonly pronounced Glencaird, and Mr. Boswell, the well-known biographer of Dr. Johnson. The political views of this festive assemblage, which are alluded to in the ballad, if they ever existed, were however laid aside, as Mr. C. did not canvass the county.—GILBERT BURNS.]

 HERE'S A HEALTH.

Tune—" *Here's a Health to them that's awa.*"

I.

HERE's a health to them that's awa,
 Here's a health to them that's awa;
 And wha winna wish guid luck to our cause,
 May never guid luck be their fa'!
 It's guid to be merry and wise,
 It's guid to be honest and true,
 It's guid to support Caledonia's cause,
 And bide by the buff and the blue.

II.

Here's a health to them that's awa,
 Here's a health to them that's awa,
 Here's a health to Charlie the chief of the clan,
 Altho' that his band be sma'.
 May liberty meet wi' success!
 May prudence protect her frae evil!
 May tyrants and tyranny tine in the mist,
 And wander their way to the devil!

III.

Here's a health to them that's awa,
 Here's a health to them that's awa;
 Here's a health to Tammie, the Norland laddie,
 That lives at the lug o' the law!
 Here's freedom to him that wad read,
 Here's freedom to him that wad write!
 There's nane ever fear'd that the truth should be heard,
 But they wham the truth wad indite.

IV.

Here's a health to them that's awa,
 Here's a health to them that's awa,
 Here's Chieftain M'Leod, a chieftain worth gowd,
 Tho' bred amang mountains o' snaw!
 Here's a health to them that's awa,
 Here's a health to them that's awa;
 And wha whinna wish guid luck to our cause,
 May never guid luck be their fa'!

[The buff and blue of whiggery had triumphed over the white rose of Jacobitism in the heart of Burns when he composed this song: Charlie Stewart had given place to Charlie Fox, and the chiefs of one faction had supplanted the chiefs of another. It is a sort of parody on a song in the Museum, which, with some old words in it, has been mistaken for an ancient strain by sundry skilful antiquarians:—

“ Here's a health to them that's away,
 Here's a health to them that's away,
 Here's a health to them that were here short syne,
 But canna be here the day.

“It’s gude to be merry and wise,
 It’s gude to be honest and true ;
 It’s gude to be off wi’ the auld luv
 Before ye be on wi’ the new.”

The old verses from which these just quoted were manufactured had a jacobitical meaning in them : they contained an advice which, if we may credit Dr. King’s Memoirs, many of the first noblemen in England as well as Scotland, stood greatly in need of :—

“It’s gude to be merry and wise,
 It’s gude to be honest and true,
 It’s gude to be off wi’ the old king,
 Afore ye are on wi’ the new.”

The Charlie of the song of Burns was Charles Fox ; Tammie was Thomas Erskine ; and M’Leod, the chief of that clan, was their firm and resolute friend.—ED.]

NO LXIX.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

January, 1795.

I FEAR for my songs ; however, a few may please, yet originality is a coy feature in composition, and in a multiplicity of efforts in the same style, disappears altogether. For these three thousand years, we poetic folks have been describing the spring, for instance ; and, as the spring continues the same, there must soon be a sameness in the imagery, &c. of these said rhyming folks.

A great critic (Aikin) on songs says that love and wine are the exclusive themes for song-writing. The following is on neither subject, and consequently is no song ; but will be allowed, I think, to be two or three pretty good prose thoughts, inverted into rhyme :—

IS THERE, FOR HONEST POVERTY.

Tune—“*For a’ that, and a’ that.*”

I.

Is there, for honest poverty,
 That hangs his head and a’ that !

The coward-slave, we pass him by,
We dare be poor for a' that!
For a' that, and a' that,
Our toil's obscure, and a' that;
The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
The man's the gowd for a' that!

II.

What tho' on hamely fare we dine,
Wear hoddin gray, and a' that;
Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine,
A man's a man, for a' that!
For a' that, and a' that,
Their tinsel show, and a' that;
The honest man, though e'er sae poor,
Is king o' men for a' that!

III.

You see yon birkie, ca'd—a lord,
Wha struts, and stares, and a' that;
Though hundreds worship at his word,
He's but a coof for a' that:
For a' that, and a' that,
His riband, star, and a' that,
The man of independent mind,
He looks and laughs at a' that!

IV.

A king can mak a belted knight,
A marquis, duke, and a' that;
But an honest man's aboon his might,
Guid faith he mauna fa' that!
For a' that, and a' that,
Their dignities, and a' that,
The pith o' sense, and pride o' worth,
Are higher ranks than a' that.

V.

Then let us pray that come it may—
As come it will for a' that—

That sense and worth, o'er a' the earth,
May bear the gree, and a' that ;
For a' that, and a' that,
It's comin' yet for a' that,
That man to man, the warld o'er,
Shall brothers be for a' that!

I do not give you the foregoing song for your book, but merely by way of *vive la bagatelle* ; for the piece is not really poetry. How will the following do for "Craigie-burn Wood"?—

CRAIGIE-BURN WOOD.

I.

SWEET fa's the eve on Craigie-burn,
And blithe awakes the morrow ;
But a' the pride o' spring's return
Can yield me nocht but sorrow.

II.

I see the flowers and spreading trees,
I hear the wild birds singing ;
But what a weary wight can please,
And care his bosom wringing ?

III.

Fain, fain would I my griefs impart,
Yet dare na for your anger ;
But secret love will break my heart,
If I conceal it langer.

IV.

If thou refuse to pity me,
If thou shalt love anither,
When yon green leaves fade frae the tree,
Around my grave they'll wither.

Farewell! God bless you.

[In his noble song, "A man's a man for a' that," the Poet has vindicated the natural and unalienable rights of his species—he has distinguished between our social condition as contemplated by God, and that artificial state brought about by the perverse ingenuity of man. In resorting to first principles, he is compelled to speak with contempt of hereditary rank, and treat it as a manifest usurpation. That genius and enterprise should raise themselves in society seems as natural as for the sun to shine; but that they will continue in the family-line from generation to generation, no person but a prince expects. God made genius personal—not hereditary: he gave the wisdom to Solomon which he refused to Rehoboam: and even in our own country, noble houses may be pointed out of which nothing remains noble save the name. Burns could not but feel that wealth, not talent, is the way to titles: the most glorious persons in British story went to the dust with plain "master" on their coffin-lids:—Spenser, Shakspeare, Milton, Locke. There should be rank and honors for all those who greatly distinguish themselves in literature and arts, as well as in arms. He who would truly contemplate the history of a country should consider that its greatness arises from the union of many qualities: Watt deserves a place as well as Wellington: nor are the achievements of Scott to be forgotten in the account of battles by sea and shore. Titles should flow from the fountain of honor readily and unsolicited to all who are illustrious: instead of which they flow almost solely to the wealthy. Those who have amassed fortunes by all manner of speculation, and have become swollen and big, like striped pumpkins flourishing on heaps of dung, are sure to have the sword laid on their shoulders, or their brows enclosed in coronets. There is nothing left for genius but to join in the song of Burns—

"Then let us pray that come it may,
As come it will for a' that;
That sense and worth o'er a' the earth,
May bear the gree, and a' that."

In this sentiment men of talent should join more earnestly, since it has been publicly declared that genius is so supremely blest as not at all to require other distinction—a doctrine which decrees to dulness the star and the garter—

"Amen—and virtue is its own reward."—Ed.]

No. LXX.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, 30th January, 1795.

MY DEAR SIR,

I THANK you heartily for "Nannie's awa," as well as for "Craigie-burn," which I think a very comely pair. Your observation on the difficulty of original writing in a number of efforts, in the same style, strikes me very forcibly; and it has again and again excited my wonder to find you continually surmounting this difficulty, in the many delightful songs you have sent me. Your *vive la bagatelle* song, "For a' that," shall undoubtedly be included in my list.

[In these cold words "Your *vive la bagatelle* song, 'For a' that,' shall undoubtedly be included in my list," Thomson accepts the present of a song which will live while the language lasts. It is likely that the verses were in his sight too bold, and that he would have preferred lines with—

"Twin pigeons billing, sparrows treading,
Fair emblems of a fruitful wedding,"

as a reverend divine, Dean Swift, expresses it.—ED.]

No. LXXI.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

February, 1795.

HERE is another trial at your favorite air:—

Tune—"Let me in this ae night."

I.

O LASSIE, art thou sleeping yet,
Or art thou waking, I would wit?
For love has bound me hand and foot,
And I would fain be in, jo.

O let me in this ae night,
 This ae, ae, ae night;
 For pity's sake this ae night,
 O rise and let me in, jo!

II.

Thou hear'st the winter wind and weet,
 Nae star blinks thro' the driving sleet:
 Tak pity on my weary feet,
 And shield me frae the rain, jo!

III.

The bitter blast that round me blows,
 Unheeded howls, unheeded fa's;
 The cauldness o' thy heart's the cause
 Of a' my grief and pain, jo.
 O let me in this ae night,
 This ae, ae, ae night;
 For pity's sake this ae night,
 O rise and let me in, jo!

HER ANSWER.

I.

O TELL na me o' wind and rain,
 Upbraid na me wi' cauld disdain!
 Gae back the gate ye cam again,
 I winna let you in, jo.
 I tell you now this ae night;
 This ae, ae, ae night;
 And ance for a' this ae night,
 I winna let you in, jo!

II.

The snellest blast, at mirkest hours,
 That round the pathless wand'rer pours,
 Is nocht to what poor she endures,
 That's trusted faithless man, jo.

III.

The sweetest flower that deck'd the mead,
 Now trodden like the vilest weed;
 Let simple maid the lesson read,
 The weird may be her ain, jo.

IV.

The bird that charm'd his summer-day,
 Is now the cruel fowler's prey;
 Let witless, trusting woman say
 How aft her fate's the same, jo.
 I tell you now this ae night,
 This ae, ae, ae night;
 And ance for a' this ae night,
 I winna let you in, jo!

I do not know whether it will do.

[If Burns drew his song of "A man's a man for a' that," solely from his own mind and fancy, there is no question that he is indebted to an old strain for the idea of these twin lyrics. He has changed the lead into gold, and dismissed a deal of dross: still the sentiment belongs to the olden times. These are part of the old words:—

"O lassie, art thou sleeping yet,
 Or are you waking, I wad wit?
 For love has bound me hand and fit,
 And I wad fain be in, O.
 O let me in this ae night,
 This ae, ae, ae night,
 O let me in this ae night,
 Or I'll ne'er come back again, O.

"The night it is baith wind and weet,
 The morn it will be snaw and sleet;
 My shoon are freezing to my feet,
 Wi' standing here alane, O.

"I am the laird o' windy wa's,
 I come na here without a cause;
 And I hae gotten mony fa's,
 Wad killed a thousand men, O.—

“ My father’s waukrife in his sleep,
 My mither the cha’mer keys does keep,
 And a’ the doors sae chirp and cheep,
 I daurna let you in, O.
 Sae gae ye’re ways this ae night,
 This ae, ae, ae night,
 O gae ye’re ways this ae night,
 I daurna let ye in, O.”

It is said that the thoughts of Burns wandered to Woodlee-Park, and his feud with Mrs. Riddel, when he composed these songs. The lady in the old verses resisted nothing like so stoutly or successfully as the modern heroine is made to do.—
 —ED.]

No. LXXII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

Ecclefechan, 7th February, 1795.

MY DEAR THOMSON,

YOU cannot have any idea of the predicament in which I write to you. In the course of my duty as supervisor (in which capacity I have acted of late), I came yesternight to this unfortunate, wicked, little village. I have gone forward, but snows, of ten feet deep, have impeded my progress: I have tried to “gae back the gate I cam again,” but the same obstacle has shut me up within insuperable bars. To add to my misfortune, since dinner, a scraper has been torturing cat-gut, in sounds that would have insulted the dying agonies of a sow under the hands of a butcher, and thinks himself, on that very account, exceeding good company. In fact, I have been in a dilemma, either to get drunk, to forget these miseries; or to hang myself, to get rid of them: like a prudent man (a character congenial to my every thought, word, and deed), I, of two evils, have chosen the least, and am very drunk, at your service!

I wrote you yesterday from Dumfries. I had not

time to tell you all I wanted to say; and Heaven knows, at present I have not capacity.

Do you know an air—I am sure you must know it—“We’ll gang nae mair to yon town”? I think, in slowish time, it would make an excellent song. I am highly delighted with it; and if you should think it worthy of your attention, I have a fair dame in my eye, to whom I would consecrate it.

As I am just going to bed, I wish you a good night.

[Ecclefechan is a little thriving village in Annandale: nor is it more known for its hiring fairs than for beautiful lasses and active young men. The latter, when cudgel-playing was regularly taught to the youth of the Scottish lowlands, distinguished themselves by skill and courage; they did not, however, enjoy their fame without contention: they had frequent feuds with the lads of Lockerby, and their laurels were put in jeopardy. On an old New Year’s-day, some thirty years ago, Ecclefechan sent some two hundred “sticks” against Lockerby: they drew themselves up beside an old fortalice, and intimated their intention of keeping their post till the sun went down:—they bit their thumbs, flourished their oak saplings, and said, “We wad like to see wha wad hinder us.” This was a matter of joy to the lads of Lockerby: an engagement immediately took place, and Ecclefechan seemed likely to triumph, when—I grieve to write it—a douce elder of the kirk seizing a stick from one who seemed unskilful in using it, rushed forward, broke the enemy’s ranks, pushed the lads of Ecclefechan rudely out of the place, and exclaimed, “That’s the way we did lang syne!” The Poet paid Ecclefechan many a visit, friendly and official, and even wrought its almost unpronounceable name into a couple of songs.—ED.]

No. LXXIII.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

25th February, 1795.

I HAVE to thank you, my dear Sir, for two epistles, one containing “Let me in this ae night;” and the

other from Ecclefechan, proving that, drunk or sober, your "mind is never muddy." You have displayed great address in the above song. Her answer is excellent, and at the same time takes away the indelicacy that otherwise would have attached to his entreaties. I like the song, as it now stands, very much.

I had hopes you would be arrested some days at Ecclefechan, and be obliged to beguile the tedious forenoons by song-making. It will give me pleasure to receive the verses you intend for "O wat ye wha's in yon town."

THE DUMFRIES VOLUNTEERS.

Tune—"Push about the jorum."

The following song was written, April, 1795. The Poet sent it to Mr. Jackson, editor of the Dumfries Journal: the original manuscript, through the kindness of my friend Mr. Milligan, is now before me.—ED.

I.

DOES haughty Gaul invasion threat?

Then let the loons beware, Sir,

There's wooden walls upon our seas,

And volunteers on shore, Sir.

The Nith shall run to Corsincon,

And Criffel sink in Solway,

Ere we permit a foreign foe

On British ground to rally!

II.

O Let us not, like snarling tykes,

In wrangling be divided;

'Till slap come in an unco loon

And wi' a rung decide it.

Be Britain still to Britain true,
 Amang oursels united;
 For never but by British hands
 Maun British wrangs be righted!

III.

The kettle o' the kirk and state,
 Perhaps a clout may fail in't;
 But deil a foreign tinkler loon
 Shall ever ca' a nail in't.
 Our fathers' bluid the kettle bought,
 And wha wad dare to spoil it;
 By heaven! the sacrilegious dog
 Shall fuel be to boil it.

IV.

The wretch that wad a tyrant own,
 And the wretch his true-born brother,
 Who would set the mob aboon the throne,
 May they be damned together!
 Who will not sing, "God save the King,"
 Shall hang as high's the steeple;
 But while we sing, "God save the King,"
 We'll ne'er forget the people.

[When the French found that we not only hesitated to overthrow all that was old and begin anew; but that we resented their interference in the affairs of other nations as well as our own, they resolved to come over, sword in hand, and force the freedom upon us which we refused to take. This threat called up the spirit of the island: and Burns enrolled himself among the gentlemen volunteers of Dumfries, and stood shoulder to shoulder with his friends Maxwell, Staig, and Syme. At a public dinner given to the officers of the corps, the Poet was expected to utter something either in verse or prose—he said nothing, for his health was then failing: but he did not miss to observe that his silence was misinterpreted. On going home he wrote "The Dumfries Volunteers." The song became popular at once, and was soon to be heard on hill and dale; for the peasantry of Scotland sing at the sheepfold and at the plough, and

cheer themselves with verse in all ordinary pursuits of life. To extend its influence still farther, he had it printed with the music upon a separate sheet by Johnson, and thus it penetrated into the nobleman's drawing-room as well as into the farmer's spence.

Some of the allusions are local, and require explanation. If Nith ran to Corsincon, it would run backward, and up hill too. The Criffel is a high green mountain on the Scottish side of the Solway, and is said, in the legends of the district, to be the materials with which a witch had collected to choke up the sea, that the English army might pass over dry-shod. Luckily, a devout shepherd came to his door in the gray of the morning, and on seeing the unsonsie carlin marching past with a mountain on her back, exclaimed "God guide us!—what next?—the very hills are leaving us." Down dropt the mountain, and away flew the witch, and never renewed her strange attempt. The sentiments of the song are understood by all ranks—they echo what every true British bosom feels.—ED.]

No. LXXIV.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

May, 1795.

ADDRESS TO THE WOODLARK.

Tune—"Where'll bonnie Ann lie."

Or, "Loch-Eroch Side."

I.

O STAY, sweet warbling woodlark, stay!
Nor quit for me the trembling spray;
A hapless lover courts thy lay,
Thy soothing fond complaining.

II.

Again, again that tender part,
That I may catch thy melting art;
For surely that would touch her heart,
Wha kills me, wi' disdaining.

III.

Say, was thy little mate unkind,
 And heard thee as the careless wind?
 Oh, nocht but love and sorrow join'd,
 Sic notes o' woe could wauken.

IV.

Thou tells o' never-ending care;
 O' speechless grief and dark despair;
 For pity's sake, sweet bird, na mair!
 Or my poor heart is broken!

Let me know, your very first leisure, how you like
 this song.

ON CHLORIS BEING ILL.

Tune—"Ay wakin', O."

I.

LONG, long the night,
 Heavy comes the morrow,
 While my soul's delight
 Is on her bed of sorrow.
 Can I cease to care?
 Can I cease to languish?
 While my darling fair
 Is on the couch of anguish?

II.

Every hope is fled,
 Every fear is terror;
 Slumber even I dread,
 Every dream is horror.

III.

Hear me, Pow'rs divine!
 Oh, in pity hear me!
 Take aught else of mine,
 But my Chloris spare me!

Long, long the night,
 Heavy comes the morrow,
 While my soul's delight
 Is on her bed of sorrow.

How do you like the foregoing?—The Irish air “Humors of Glen,” is a great favorite of mine, and as, except the silly stuff in the “Poor Soldier,” there are not any decent verses for it, I have written for it as follows:—

CALEDONIA.

Tune—“*Humors of Glen.*”

I.

THEIR groves o' sweet myrtle let foreign lands reckon,
 Where bright-beaming summers exalt the perfume ;
 Far dearer to me yon lone glen o' green breckan,
 Wi' the burn stealing under the lang yellow broom :
 Far dearer to me are yon humble broom bowers,
 Where the blue-bell and gowan lurk lowly unseen ;
 For there, lightly tripping amang the wild flowers,
 A listening the linnet, aft wanders my Jean.

II.

Tho' rich is the breeze in their gay sunny valleys,
 And cauld CALEDONIA's blast on the wave ;
 Their sweet-scented woodlands that skirt the proud
 palace,
 What are they ?—The haunt o' the tyrant and slave !
 The slave's spicy forests, and gold-bubbling fountains,
 The brave Caledonian views wi' disdain ;
 He wanders as free as the winds of his mountains,
 Save love's willing fetters, the chains o' his Jean.

'T WAS NA HER BONNIE BLUE EEN.

Tune—" *Laddie lie near me.*"

I.

'T WAS na her bonnie blue een was my ruin ;
 Fair tho' she be, that was ne'er my undoing :
 'Twas the dear smile when naebody did mind us,
 'Twas the bewitching, sweet stown glance o' kindness.

II.

Sair do I fear that to hope is denied me,
 Sair do I fear that despair maun abide me !
 But tho' fell fortune should fate us to sever,
 Queen shall she be in my bosom for ever.

III.

Mary, I'm thine wi' a passion sincerest,
 And thou hast plighted me love o' the dearest !
 And thou'rt the angel that never can alter—
 Sooner the sun in his motion would falter.

Let me hear from you.

[The "Address to the Woodlark" is composed to a tune which carries the not unpleasant burthen of very old and humorous verses :—

"Where will bonnie Annie lie,
 Annie lie, Annie lie,
 Where will bonnie Annie lie,
 Till she shoot owre the simmer?
 Down among the feather beds,
 The feather beds, the feather beds,
 Down among the feather beds,
 Wi' many a cannie kimmer."

There are other verses in which these words are varied, beginning

"Where will our gudeman lie?"

The song on the "Illness of Chloris," is one of the Poet's brief and happy things : it is modelled on an old lyric, still popular in some parts of the north, and justly so :—

“ Ay waking, oh,
 Waking ay, and weary,
 Sleep I canna get,
 For thinking on my dearie.
 I have fallen in love
 Wi’ a’ the world’s darling,
 An’ canna see the sun
 For bonnie May Macfarlane.”

Another version throws in a spice of the ridiculous :

“ I sat down and wrote
 My true love a letter ;
 My lad canna read,
 I love him a’ the better.
 Ay waking, oh,
 Waking ay, and weary,
 Hope is sweet, but ne’er
 Sae sweet ay thee, my dearie.”

The exquisite song of “ Caledonia” unites domestic affection with love of country, and is exceedingly popular. The heroine was Mrs. Burns, who so charmed the Poet by singing it with taste and feeling, that he declared it one of his luckiest lyrics. She sang with ease and simplicity : science adorned without injuring nature : and her “ wood-note wild” was said to be almost unequalled.

It is remark-worthy, that the song in honor of his wife was accompanied by two in honor of his friend. For “ ’Twas na her bonnie blue een were my ruin,” we are indebted to Jean Lorimer. It is true that “ Mary” is wrought into the texture of the verse : but copies have been seen with the first line of the last verse running thus :—

“ Jeanie, I’m thine wi’ a passion sincerest.”

It has already been intimated that this Nithsdale beauty was a sort of lay-figure, on which the muse hung her garlands.—ED.]

No. LXXV.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

You must not think, my good Sir, that I have any intention to enhance the value of my gift, when I say, in justice to the ingenious and worthy artist, that the

design and execution of the Cotter's Saturday Night is, my opinion, one the happiest productions of Allan's pencil. I shall be grievously disappointed if you are not quite pleased with it.

The figure intended for your portrait, I think strikingly like you, as far as I can remember your phiz. This should make the piece interesting to your family every way. Tell me whether Mrs. Burns finds you out among the figures.

I cannot express the feeling of admiration with which I have read your pathetic "Address to the Woodlark," your elegant "Panegyric on Caledonia," and your affecting verses on "Chloris's illness." Every repeated perusal of these gives new delight. The other song, to "Laddie, lie near me," though not equal to these, is very pleasing.

No. LXXVI.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

HOW CRUEL ARE THE PARENTS.

Tune—"John Anderson, my jo."

I.

How cruel are the parents
Who riches only prize,
And, to the wealthy booby,
Poor woman sacrifice!
Meanwhile the hapless daughter
Has but a choice of strife;
To shun a tyrant father's hate,
Become a wretched wife.

II.

The ravening hawk pursuing,
The trembling dove thus flies,
To shun impelling ruin
Awhile her pinions tries;

Till of escape despairing,
 No shelter or retreat,
 She trusts the ruthless falconer,
 And drops beneath his feet!

MARK YONDER POMP.

Tune—" *Deil tak the wars.*"

I.

MARK yonder pomp of costly fashion
 Round the wealthy, titled bride;
 But when compar'd with real passion,
 Poor is all that princely pride.

What are the showy treasures?

What are the noisy pleasures?

The gay gaudy glare of vanity and art;

The polished jewel's blaze

May draw the wond'ring gaze,

And courtly grandeur bright

The fancy may delight,

But never, never can come near the heart.

II.

But, did you see my dearest Chloris

In simplicity's array;

Lovely as yonder sweet opening flower is,

Shrinking from the gaze of day,

O then, the heart alarming,

And all resistless charming,

In Love's delightful fetters she chains the willing
 soul!

Ambition would disown

The world's imperial crown,

Even Avarice would deny

His worshipp'd deity,

And feel through every vein Love's raptures roll.

Well! this is not amiss. You see how I answer your orders: your tailor could not be more punctual. I am just now in a high fit of poetizing, provided that the strait-jacket of criticism don't cure me. If you can in a post or two administer a little of the intoxicating potion of your applause, it will raise your humble servant's phrenzy to any height you want. I am at this moment "holding high converse" with the Muses, and have not a word to throw away on such a prosaic dog as you are.

[Well might the Poet exclaim to Thomson, "See how I answer your orders: your tailor could not be more punctual." It is really surprising with what patience he continued from day to day measuring out words to all manner of tunes: now lively, then mournful: tender one hour, sarcastic another: idolizing women in one verse, and preferring in the next the Hawick gill and the tappit hen. His resources seem to have been wonderful. The song to the tune of "John Anderson" is altered from an old English one: it preaches a sermon on matrimonial alliances, which all believe and no one obeys: parents still use undue influence with their children, and, while securing a fleeting splendor, are heedless of entailing a lasting wretchedness. The song to the air of "Deil tak the wars" is original, but has not the fine lyrical flow of other of his songs: Chloris did not always rightly inspire him.—ED.]

NO. LXXVII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

May, 1795.

TEN thousand thanks for your elegant present: though I am ashamed of the value of it, being bestowed on a man who has not by any means merited such an instance of kindness. I have shown it to two or three judges of the first abilities here, and they all agree with me in classing it as a first-rate production.

My phiz is sae kenspeckle, that the very joiner's apprentice whom Mrs. Burns employed to break up the parcel (I was out of town that day) knew it at once. My most grateful compliments to Allan, who has honored my rustic muse so much with his masterly pencil. One strange coincidence is, that the little one who is making the felonious attempt on the cat's tail, is the most striking likeness of an ill-deedie, d—n'd wee rumble-gairie urchin of mine, whom, from that propensity to witty wickedness and manfu' mischief, which even at twa days auld I foresaw would from the striking features of his disposition, I named Willie Nicol; after a certain friend of mine, who is one of the masters of a grammar-school in a city which shall be nameless.

Give the enclosed epigram to my much-valued friend Cunningham, and tell him that on Wednesday I go to visit a friend of his, to whom his friendly partiality in speaking of me, in a manner introduced me—I mean a well-known military and literary character, Colonel Dirom.

You do not tell me how you liked my two last songs. Are they condemned?

[The picture alluded to was painted from the "Cotter's Saturday Night:" it displays at once the talent and want of taste of the ingenious artist. The scene is a solemn one: but the serenity of the moment is disturbed by what some esteem as a beauty, namely, the attempt to cut the top of the cat's tail, by the little merry urchin, seated on the floor. The unity of the sentiment is destroyed: it jars with the harmony of the rest of the picture as much as a snail does in crawling in the bosom of a new-opened rose. This sense of propriety is required in such compositions: Burns was a great master in it: he introduced true love, domestic gladness, and love of country along with devotion in his noble poem of "The Cotter's Saturday Night," but he never dreamed of throwing in any of his ludicrous or humorous touches—all is as much in keeping as in the best conceived picture.—ED.]

No. LXXVIII.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

13th May, 1795.

It gives me great pleasure to find that you are all so well satisfied with Mr. Allan's production. The chance resemblance of your little fellow, whose promising disposition appeared so very early, and suggested whom he should be named after, is curious enough. I am acquainted with that person, who is a prodigy of learning and genius, and a pleasant fellow, though no saint.

You really make me blush when you tell me you have not merited the drawing from me. I do not think I can ever repay you, or sufficiently esteem and respect you, for the liberal and kind manner in which you have entered into the spirit of my undertaking, which could not have been perfected without you. So I beg you would not make a fool of me again, by speaking of obligation.

I like your two last songs very much, and am happy to find you are in such a high fit of poetizing. Long may it last! Clarke has made a fine pathetic air to Mallet's superlative ballad of "William and Margaret," and is to give it to me, to be enrolled among the elect.

 No. LXXIX.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

IN "Whistle, and I'll come to ye, my lad," the iteration of that line is tiresome to my ear. Here goes what I think is an improvement:—

"O whistle, and I'll come to ye, my lad;
 O whistle, and I'll come to ye, my lad;
 Though father and mother and a' should gae mad,
 Thy Jeanie will venture wi' ye, my lad."

In fact, a fair dame, at whose shrine I, the Priest of the Nine, offer up the incense of Parnassus; a dame whom the Graces have attired in witchcraft, and whom the Loves have armed with lightning, a fair one, herself the heroine of the song, insists on the amendment, and dispute her commands if you dare!

THIS IS NO MY AIN LASSIE.

Tune—" *This is no my ain house.*"

I.

O THIS is no my ain lassie,
Fair tho' the lassie be;
O weel ken I my ain lassie,
Kind love is in her e'e.
I see a form, I see a face,
Ye weel may wi' the fairest place:
It wants, to me, the witching grace,
The kind love that's in her e'e.

II.

She's bonnie, blooming, straight, and tall,
And lang has had my heart in thrall;
And ay it charms my very saul,
The kind love that's in her e'e.

III.

A thief sae pawkie is my Jean,
To steal a blink, by a' unseen;
But gleg as light are lovers' e'en,
When kind love is in the e'e.

IV.

It may escape the courtly sparks,
It may escape the learned clerks;
But weel the watching lover marks
The kind love that's in her e'e.

O this is no my ain lassie,
Fair tho' the lassie be;
O weel ken I my ain lassie,
Kind love is in her e'e.

Do you know that you have roused the torpidity of Clarke at last? He has requested me to write three or four songs for him, which he is to set to music himself. The enclosed sheet contains two songs for him, which please to present to my valued friend Cunningham.

I enclose the sheet open, both for your inspection, and that you may copy the song "O bonnie was yon rosy brier." I do not know whether I am right; but that song pleases me, and as it is extremely probable that Clarke's newly-roused celestial spark will be soon smothered in the fogs of indolence, if you like the song, it may go as Scottish verses to the air of "I wish my love was in a mire;" and poor Erskine's English lines may follow.

I enclose you, a "For a' that and a' that," which was never in print: it is a much superior song to mine. I have been told that it was composed by a lady.

TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

NOW SPRING HAS CLAD THE GROVE IN GREEN.

SCOTTISH SONG.

I.

Now spring has clad the grove in green,
And strew'd the lea wi' flowers:
The furrow'd waving corn is seen
Rejoice in fostering showers;
While ilka thing in nature join
Their sorrows to forego,
O why thus all alone are mine
The weary steps of woe?

II.

The trout within yon wimpling burn
Glides swift, a silver dart,
And safe beneath the shady thorn
Defies the angler's art:
My life was ance that careless stream,
That wanton trout was I;
But love, wi' unrelenting beam,
Has scorch'd my fountains dry.

III.

The little flow'ret's peaceful lot,
In yonder cliff that grows,
Which, save the linnet's flight, I wot,
Nae ruder visit knows,
Was mine; till love has o'er me past,
And blighted a' my bloom,
And now beneath the with'ring blast
My youth and joy consume.

IV.

The waken'd lav'rock warbling springs
And climbs the early sky,
Winnowing blithe her dewy wings
In morning's rosy eye;
As little reckt I sorrow's power,
Until the flow'ry snare
O' witching love, in luckless hour,
Made me the thrall o' care.

V.

O had my fate been Greenland snows,
Or Afric's burning zone,
Wi' man and nature leagu'd my foes,
So Peggy ne'er I'd known!
The wretch whase doom is, "hope nae mair,"
What tongue his woes can tell!
Within whase bosom, save despair,
Nae kinder spirits dwell,

O BONNIE WAS YON ROSY BRIER.

I.

O BONNIE was yon rosy brier,
 That blooms sae far frae haunt o' man ;
 And bonnie she, and ah, how dear !
 It shaded frae the e'enin sun.

II.

Yon rosebuds in the morning dew
 How pure, amang the leaves sae green ;
 But purer was the lover's vow
 They witness'd in their shade yestreen.

III.

All in its rude and prickly bower,
 That crimson rose, how sweet and fair !
 But love is far a sweeter flower
 Amid life's thorny path o' care.

IV.

The pathless wild, and wimpling burn,
 Wi' Chloris in my arms, be mine ;
 And I the world, nor wish, nor scorn,
 Its joys and griefs alike resign.

Written on the blank leaf of a copy of the last edition of my poems, presented to the lady whom, in so many fictitious reveries of passion, but with the most ardent sentiments of real friendship, I have so often sung under the name of Chloris :—

TO CHLORIS.

'Tis Friendship's pledge, my young, fair friend,
 Nor thou the gift refuse,
 Nor with unwilling ear attend
 The moralizing muse.

Since thou, in all thy youth and charms,
 Must bid the world adieu,
 (A world 'gainst peace in constant arms),
 To join the friendly few.

Since, thy gay morn of life o'ercast,
 Chill came the tempest's lower ;
 (And ne'er misfortune's eastern blast
 Did nip a fairer flower).

Since life's gay scenes must charm no more,
 Still much is left behind ;
 Still nobler wealth hast thou in store—
 The comforts of the mind !

Thine is the self-approving glow
 On conscious honor's part ;
 And—dearest gift of heaven below—
 Thine friendship's truest heart.

The joys refin'd of sense and taste,
 With every Muse to rove :
 And doubly were the poet blest
 These joys could he improve.

Une bagatelle de l'amitie.—COILA.

[Of these three songs tradition has said little :—"This is no my ain lassie" is the happiest, and indeed one of the happiest of the Poet's productions. He was acquainted with all the mysteries of love-making, and familiar with all the romance of trystings in lonely places, and meeting at forbidden hours, when age and circumspection were asleep. What can be finer or truer than these lines :—

"A thief sae pawkie is my Jean,
 To steal a blink by a' unseen,
 But gleg as light are lovers' e'en,
 When kind love is in the e'e."

The air to which this song is composed has words of its own ; but they have no kindred feeling with the verses of Burns :—

“ This is no my ain house,
 I ken by the bigging o’t;
 For bread and cheese are my door-cheeks,
 And pancakes the rigging o’t.”

The second song has some beautiful imagery; but it has also an air of labor about it: he prescribed it as a sort of poetic medicine for the heart of his friend Alexander Cunningham, which had suffered from the bright eyes and scornful tongue of an Edinburgh dame. It is no easy matter for a Poet to load himself with another man’s woes, and sing of them with a natural and deep emotion.

The third lyric takes Chloris for its theme, and speaks of the delights of mutual love, when the sun was setting, the dews beginning to fall, and the fragrance of the rose filling all the air. These were raptures into which the Poet threw himself, that he might fulfil his bargain with Thomson, and accommodate with rhyme a certain number of tunes.—ED.]

No. LXXX.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, 3rd August, 1795.

MY DEAR SIR,

THIS will be delivered to you by a Dr. Brianton, who has read your works, and pants for the honor of your acquaintance. I do not know the gentleman; but his friend who applied to me for this introduction, being an excellent young man, I have no doubt he is worthy of all acceptation.

My eyes have just been gladdened, and my mind feasted, with your last packet—full of pleasant things indeed. What an imagination is yours! it is superfluous to tell you that I am delighted with all the three songs, as well as with your elegant and tender verses to Chloris.

I am very sorry you should be induced to alter “O whistle and I’ll come to ye, my lad,” to the prosaic line, “Thy Jeany will venture wi’ ye, my lad,” I must be

permitted to say that I do not think the latter either reads or sings so well as the former. I wish, therefore, you would in my name petition the charming Jeanie, whoever she be, to let the line remain unaltered.

I should be happy to see Mr. Clarke produce a few airs to be joined to your verses. Every body regrets his writing so very little, as every body acknowledges his ability to write well. Pray was the resolution formed coolly before dinner, or was it a midnight vow made over a bowl of punch with the bard?

I shall not fail to give Mr. Cunningham what you have sent him.

P. S.—The lady's "For a' that, and a' that," is sensible enough, but no more to be compared to yours than I to Hercules.

[Currie in a note to this letter, says that he has heard the heroine of

"Whistle and I'll come to ye, my lad,"

sing it in the very spirit of arch simplicity that it required, and the line,

"Thy Jeanie will venture wi' ye, my lad,"

came gracefully from her lips. There is no doubt that Currie alludes to Mrs. Riddel; but the heroine was one of a lower degree than her of Woodlee-Park, nor had she any talent for verse or perhaps taste in poetry. But she was aware of the light which the genius of Burns shed on all to whom he was partial: and, moreover, it gave her a sort of distinction or pre-eminence among the rustic damsels of the vale.—ED.]

No. LXXXI.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

FORLORN MY LOVE, NO COMFORT NEAR.

Tune—"Let me in this ae Night."

I.

FORLORN, my love, no comfort near,
Far, far from thee, I wander here ;
Far, far from thee, the fate severe
At which I most repine, love.

O wert thou, love, but near me ;
But near, near, near me ;
How kindly thou wouldst cheer me,
And mingle sighs with mine, love.

II.

Around me scowls a wintry sky,
That blasts each bud of hope and joy ;
And shelter, shade, nor home have I,
Save in those arms of thine, love.

III.

Cold, alter'd friendship's cruel part,
To poison fortune's ruthless dart,
Let me not break thy faithful heart,
And say that fate is mine, love.

IV.

But dreary tho' the moments fleet,
O let me think we yet shall meet !
That only ray of solace sweet
Can on thy Chloris shine, love.

O wert thou, love, but near me ;
But near, near, near me ;
How kindly thou wouldst cheer me,
And mingle sighs with mine, love.

How do you like foregoing? I have written it within this hour: so much for the speed of my Pegasus; but what say you to his bottom?

[The complaint of a lover of the coldness or the absence of his mistress is a favorite theme with lyric poets. But the bards of the olden and the bards of these our latter times sung with a difference. Modern minstrels keep a poor lover enduring the rain or the snow of a stormy night, while his inexorable mistress looks out at her window as cold as the northern star, and reproaches him with evil intentions and all manner of reprehensible thoughts. The eldern minstrels did not make their ladies of icicles: a little maidenly bashfulness was exhibited; but at last pity influenced the dame;—the doors were opened softly: green rushes were strewed on the floor and stair, to hinder the lover's steps to be heard; and he was conducted—past, perhaps a mother's bed-side—or, more perilous still, a maiden aunt's—to a secret chamber, into which we shall not attempt to force our way. An old song, to the same air to which this song is written, gives a rude picture of such interviews:—

“O I'll come stealing saftly in,
And cannilie make little din;
To keep me here wad be a sin,
Amang the wintry rain, jo.

“Cast off the shoon frae aff yere feet,
Cast back the door unto the weet;
Syne to my chamber craftily creep,
But ne'er come back again, jo.

“O in he crept sae cannilie,
O in he staw sae privilie;
Nane save my sel' could hear or see—
Then he was a' my ain, jo.

We cannot follow the old poet farther.—**Ed.]**

LXXXII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

LAST MAY A BRAW WOOER.

Tune—" *The Lothian Lassie.*"

I.

LAST May a braw wooer cam down the lang glen,
And sair wi' his love he did deave me ;
I said there was naething I hated like men,
The deuce gae wi'm, to believe, believe me,
The deuce gae wi'm, to believe me!

II.

He spak o' the darts in my bonnie black een,
And vow'd for my love he was dying :
I said he might die when he liked for Jean,
The Lord forgie me for lying, for lying,
The Lord forgie me for lying !

III.

A weel-stocked mailen—himself for the laird—
And marriage aff-hand, were his proffers :
I never loot on that I kenn'd it, or car'd,
But thought I may hae waur offers, waur offers,
But thought I might hae waur offers.

IV.

But what wad ye think? In a fortnight or less—
The deil tak his taste to gae near her !
He up the lang loan to my black cousin Bess,
Guess ye how, the jad ! I could bear her, could bear
her,
Guess ye how, the jad ! I could bear her.

V.

But a' the niest week as I fretted wi' care,
 I gaed to the tryste o' Dalgarnock,
 And wha but my fine fickle lover was there!
 I glowr'd as I'd seen a warlock, a warlock,
 I glowr'd as I'd seen a warlock.

VI.

But owre my left shouther I gae him a blink,
 Lest neebors might say I was saucy;
 My wooer he caper'd as he'd been in drink,
 And vow'd I was his dear lassie, dear lassie,
 And vow'd I was his dear lassie.

VII.

I spier'd for my cousin fu' couthy and sweet,
 Gin she had recovered her hearin',
 And how her new shoon fit her auld shackl't feet,
 But, heavens! how he fell a swearin', a swearin',
 But, heavens! how he fell a swearin'!

VIII.

He begged, for Gudesake, I wad be his wife,
 Or else I wad kill him wi' sorrow;
 So, e'en to preserve the poor body in life,
 I think I maun wed him to-morrow, to-morrow,
 I think I maun wed him to-morrow.

FRAGMENT.

CHLORIS.

Tune—"Caledonian Hunt's Delight."

I.

WHY, why tell thy lover,
 Bliss he never must enjoy;
 Why, why undeceive him,
 And give all his hopes the lie?

II.

O why, while fancy, raptured, slumbers,
 Chloris, Chloris all the theme,
 Why, why wouldst thou cruel
 Wake thy lover from his dream?

Such is the peculiarity of the rhythm of this air, that I find it impossible to make another stanza to suit it.

I am at present quite occupied with the charming sensations of the tooth-ache, so have not a word to spare.

[The alterations made by Burns in his songs are far from numerous. He generally allowed them to remain as he first sent them to the world : to have made experiments on verses which became popular as soon as known would have been injudicious ; yet, at times, a fit of emendation came upon him, and he altered some of his cleverest songs. Among these we may mention the one beginning

“Last May a braw wooer came down the lang glen.”

He not only made many changes in the words, but he even altered the scene where the little lively drama is laid. In the original copy sent to Thomson, one of the lines in the fourth verse runs thus :—

“He up the Gateslack to my black cousin Bess.”

To Gateslack, as well as to Dalgarnock in the next verse, Thomson objected : they were not sufficiently soft and suitable for the voice. To which Burns replied, “Gateslack is the name of a particular place—a kind of passage up among the Lowther hills on the confines of this county. Dalgarnock is also the name of a romantic spot near the Nith, where are still a ruined church and a burial ground. However, let the first line run

‘He up the lang loan to my black cousin Bess.’”

“It is always a pity,” says Currie, “to throw out anything that gives locality to our Poet’s verses.” In this case to have expelled Dalgarnock would have been an injury. It is the very place where Old Mortality is represented by Scott repairing cherubs’ heads and defaced inscriptions on the grave-stones of the Cameronian worthies. It is one of the loveliest spots, too,

on Nith-side. The kirk and kirk-yard belonged to the old parish of Dalgarnock when it was incorporated with Closeburn: the affections of the people linger about the spot where their fathers' ashes lie, and it is still used as a place of interment.

The reader will observe the nature of the alterations which Burns thought this song required, by comparing the first version communicated to the Museum, with that sent to Thomson:—

Tune—*The Lothian Lassie.*”

“Ae day a braw wooer came down the lang glen,
And sair wi' his love he did deave me;
But I said there was naething I hated like men,
The deuce gae wi' him to believe me, believe me,
The deuce gae wi' him to believe me.

“A weel stocket mailen, himself o't the laird,
An' bridal aff hand was the proffer;
I never loot on that I kenned or I cared,
But I thought I might get a waur offer, waur offer,
But I thought I might get a waur offer.

“He spake o' the darts o' my bonnie black een
And O for my love he was dien';
But I said he might die when he likit for Jean,
The Gude forgie' me for lien', for lien',
The Gude forgie' me for lien'.

“But what do you think! in a fortnight or less—
The deil's in his taste to gae near her!
He's down to the castle to black cousin Bess,
Think how, the jade! I could endure her, endure her,
Think how, the jade! I could endure her

“An' a' the niest week, as I fretted wi' care,
I gaed to the tryste o' Dalgarnock,
And wha but my braw fickle wooer was there,
Wha glowered as if he'd seen a warlock, a warlock,
Wha glowered as if he'd seen a warlock.

“But owre my left shouther I gied him a blink,
Lest neighbours should think I was saucy;
My wooer he caper'd as he'd been in drink,
And vowed that I was a dear lassie, dear lassie,
And vowed that I was a dear lassie.

“I spier'd for my cousin fou couthie an' sweet,
An' if she'd recovered her hearin',
An' how my auld shoon suited her shauchled feet,
Gude save us! how he fell a swearin', a swearin',
Gude save us! how he fell a swearin'.

“He begged me for Gudesake that I’d be his wife,
Or else I wad kill him wi’ sorrow ;
And, just to preserve the poor body in life,
I think I will wed him to-morrow, to-morrow,
I think I will wed him to-morrow.”

This is, in some respects, a better version of the song than the copy sent to Thomson. The third line in the seventh verse of the latter is altogether wrong, and cannot surely be as Burns wrote it. It is nonsense to ask

“And how her new shoon fit her auld shakl’t feet?”

The satiric allusion is preserved in Johnson’s version :—

“And how my auld shoon suited her shauchled feet.”

“Auld shoon,” in the language of rustic wooing, represent a discarded lover. Thus, in the old song,—

“Ye may tell the coof that gets her
That he gets but my auld shoon.”

It was this—and well it might which made the wooer fall “a swearing :”—the transposition, too, of the verses lets us a little into the character of the lady : she puts that sarcastic question after bestowing the blink “owre her left shouther :”—she was desirous of showing her lover that the conquest was not quite achieved.—ED.]

No. LXXXIII.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

3d June, 1795.

MY DEAR SIR,

YOUR English verses to “Let me in this ae night,” are tender and beautiful ; and your ballad to the “Lothian Lassie” is a master-piece for its humor and naïveté. The fragment for the “Caledonian Hunt” is quite suited to the original measure of the air, and, as it plagues you so, the fragment must content it. I would rather, as I said before, have had Bacchanalian words, had it so pleased the Poet ; but, nevertheless, for what we have received Lord make us thankful.

[It was not without reason that Thomson wrote in this gentle and conciliatory strain: the Poet was suffering from ill health and depressed fortune, and that slow consuming illness which arrested him in his bright career was more than beginning to manifest itself. To Thomson he seems not to have unbosomed himself so fully as he did to Johnson.—“ You should have heard,” he thus writes to the latter, “ from me long ago; but, over and above some vexatious share in the pecuniary losses of these accursed times, I have all this winter been plagued with low spirits and blue devils, so that I have almost hung my harp on the willow trees. Give a copy of the Museum to my worthy friend Mr. Peter Hill, bookseller, to bind for me, interleaved with blank leaves, exactly as he did the Laird of Glenriddel’s, that I may insert every anecdote I can learn, together with my own criticisms and remarks on the songs. A copy of this kind I shall leave with you, the editor, to publish at some after period, by way of making the Museum a book famous to the end of time, and you renowned for ever. Thank you for the copies of my volunteer ballad, ‘ Does haughty Gaul invasion threat.’ Our friend Clarke has done, indeed, well: ’tis chaste and beautiful. I have not met with any thing that has pleased me so much. You know I am no connoisseur, but that I am an amateur will be allowed me.”]

The five following songs were communicated about this period to Johnson. They help to preserve the train of the Poet’s musings unbroken, and show what he was about during the hours that ill-health, lowness of spirits, and a dread of the darkening future gave him a respite.—ED.]

THE HIGHLAND WIDOW’S LAMENT.

I.

OH! I am come to the low countrie,
 Och-on, och-on, och-rie!
 Without a penny in my purse,
 To buy a meal to me.

II.

It was na sae in the Highland hills,
 Och-on, och-on, och-rie!
 Nae woman in the country wide
 Sae happy was as me.

III.

For then I had a score o' kye,
Och-on, och-on, och-rie!
Feeding on yon hills so high,
And giving milk to me.

IV.

And there I had three score o' yowes,
Och-on, och-on, och-rie!
Skipping on yon bonnie knowes,
And casting woo' to me.

V.

I was the happiest of a' the clan,
Sair, sair may I repine;
For Donald was the brawest lad,
And Donald he was mine.

VI.

Till Charlie Stewart cam' at last,
Sae far to set us free;
My Donald's arm was wanted then,
For Scotland and for me.

VII.

Their waefu' fate what need I tell,
Right to the wrang did yield:
My Donald and his country fell
Upon Culloden's field.

VIII.

Oh! I am come to the low countrie,
Och-on, och-on, och-rie!
Nae woman in the world wide
Sae wretched now as me.

[This song is said to be a homely version of a Highland lament for the ruin which followed the rebellion of the "forty-five." Burns heard it sung in one of his northern excursions, and begged a translation. It gives no exaggerated

picture of the desolation wrought in the north by the Duke of Cumberland, whose atrocities made the prophecy of Peden be credited—"The day is at hand when a man may ride fifty miles in Scotland, and not see a reeking house, nor hear a crowing cock." To subdue and root out rebellion was a duty; but "Butcher Willie," as the peasantry with great propriety called the Duke, in accomplishing this, was savage and remorseless. Smollet, who lived in those melancholy times, has given us a lasting picture of the sufferings of his country in his inimitable "Tears of Scotland:" nor has Sir Walter Scott spared either sympathy for the sufferers, or reproaches on him who was so wantonly barbarous. The castles and homes of the rebels were given to the flames; their cattle driven away, and their wives and children were to be seen roaming, houseless and famishing, among the lonely glens and desolate moors of the north. The execution, too, of those taken in arms was beyond all belief barbarous: they were hung by the neck for five minutes, cut down before they were dead—their bosoms opened, and their hearts torn out: several were observed by the bystanders to struggle with the executioner in performing the last part of this terrible tragedy. Human nature shudders at such proceedings; yet the public heart and eye of London must have been hardened that endured the exhibition of the ghastly heads of Lovat, Balmerino, and Kilmarnock, on Temple Bar, for forty years and more!—ED.]

TO GENERAL DUMOURIER.

A PARODY ON ROBIN ADAIR.

I.

YOU'RE welcome to despots, Dumourier;
 You're welcome to despots, Dumourier;
 How does Dampiere do?
 Aye, and Bournonville, too?
 Why did they not come along with you, Dumourier?

II.

I will fight France with you, Dumourier;
 I will fight France with you, Dumourier;
 I will fight France with you,
 I will take my chance with you;
 my soul I'll dance a dance with you, Dumourier.

III.

Then let us fight about, Dumourier ;
 Then let us fight about, Dumourier ;
 Then let us fight about,
 Till freedom's spark is out,
 Then we'll be damn'd, no doubt, Dumourier.

[One day Burns happened to be in the King's Arms Inn, Dumfries, when he overheard a stranger vindicating the defection of General Dumourier from the ranks of the French army. The Poet presently began to croon words to the tune of Robin Adair, in a low tone of voice : on being asked what he was about, he said he was giving a welcome to General Dumourier, and repeated the verses as they are printed. Though Burns, in common with almost all mankind, commended the principles of the great reformers of France, he was not slack in deploring the follies and the crimes which they proceeded to commit. In a mood between jest and earnest, he wrote a song such as he supposed Joseph Gerald, of the British Convention, might with propriety sing to his associates : a verse or two will be sufficient to show that in poetic merit it has no right to be named—as it has been—with Bruce's address to his men at Bannockburn :—

“ Why should we idly waste our prime
 Repeating our oppressions?
 Come, rouse to arms, 'tis now the time
 To punish past transgressions.
 'Tis said that kings can do no wrong—
 Their murderous deeds deny it ;
 And, since from us their power is sprung,
 We have a right to try it.
 Now each true patriot's song shall be,
 Welcome death or libertie.”

The Poet proceeds in a strain—of which it is as well, perhaps, to repeat but a part—to advise the princes of the earth how to comport themselves, to promise prelates translation by means of the gibbet, and to threaten unrighteous judges and corrupt juries with death :—

“ Proud bishops next we will translate,
 Among priest-crafted martyrs ;
 The guillotine on peers shall wait,
 And knights shall hang in garters ;

Those despots long have trod us down,
 And judges are their engines—
 Such wretched minions of a crown
 Demand the people's vengeance."

Having purified the earth, he concludes in a true Spencean style :—

"The golden age we'll then revive,
 Each man will be a brother;
 In harmony we all shall live,
 And share the earth together.
 In virtue trained, enlightened youth
 Will love each fellow-creature;
 And future years shall prove the truth
 That man is good by nature.
 Then let us toast, with three times three,
 The reign of peace and libertie."

Such were the speculations of the sons of men in those days ;
 but there were dragons in the way.—ED.]

PEG-A-RAMSEY.

Tune—" *Cauld is the e'enin' blast.*"

I.

CAULD is the e'enin' blast
 O' Boreas o'er the pool,
 And dawin' it is dreary
 When birks are bare at Yule.

II.

O bitter blaws the e'enin' blast
 When bitter bites the frost,
 And in the mirk and dreary drift
 The hills and glens are lost.

III.

Ne'er sae murky blew the night
 That drifted o'er the hill,
 But a bonnie Peg-a-Ramsey
 Gat grist to her mill.

["Bonnie Peg-a-Ramsey" is as renowned in the amatory songs of the north as

"French Joan or English Mall"

are in the martial ballads of France and England. That she was beautiful and condescending, the fragments of old song still bear evidence :—

"O bonnie Peg-a-Ramsey,
As a half-blin' man may see,
Has a sweet and sonsie look,
And a gleg and glentinge'e."—ED.]

THERE WAS A BONNIE LASS.

I.

THERE was a bonnie lass,
And a bonnie, bonnie lass,
And she lo'ed her bonnie laddie dear ;
Till war's loud alarms
Tore her laddie frae her arms,
Wi' mony a sigh and tear.

II.

Over sea, over shore,
Where the cannons loudly roar,
He still was a stranger to fear :
And nocht could him quell,
Or his bosom assail,
But the bonnie lass he lo'ed sae dear.

[Burns sometimes commenced a song, and, like Milton, "nothing pleased with what he had done," threw it aside, and addressed himself to some other subject or air, to which

"Words came skelpin' rank and file."

This is one of those unfinished snatches—yet not unworthy of preservation.—ED.]

O MALLY'S MEEK, MALLY'S SWEET.

I.

O MALLY's meek, Mally's sweet,
 Mally's modest and discreet,
 Mally's rare, Mally's fair,
 Mally's every way complete.
 As I was walking up the street,
 A barefit maid I chanc'd to meet ;
 But O the road was very hard
 For that fair maiden's tender feet.

II.

It were mair meet that those fine feet
 Were weel lac'd up in silken shoon,
 And 'twere more fit that she should sit
 Within yon chariot gilt aboon.

III.

Her yellow hair, beyond compare,
 Comes trinkling down her swan-white neck ;
 And her two eyes, like stars in skies,
 Would keep a sinking ship frae wreck.
 O Mally's meek, Mally's sweet,
 Mally's modest and discreet,
 Mally's rare, Mally's fair,
 Mally's every way complete.

["O Mally's meek, and Mally's sweet" stands in the Museum the last of all the communications of Burns. The Poet one day, it is said, was walking along the High-street of Dumfries, when he met a young woman from the country, who, with her shoes and stockings packed thriftily up, and her petticoats kilted,

"Which did sweetly shaw
 Her straight bare legs that whiter were than snaw,"

was proceeding towards the Galloway side of the Nith. This sight, by no means so unusual then as now, influenced the muse of Burns, and the result was this exquisite lyric. The last verse is

uncommonly happy. It would appear that her name was not unknown to the Poet, but—

“For reasons best kent to himself,”

he has communicated no more than what the verses relate.—
ED.]

No. LXXXIV.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

5th Feb. 1796.

“O Robby Burns, are ye sleeping yet?
Or are ye waukin, I would wit?”

THE pause you have made, my dear Sir, is awful! Am I never to hear from you again? I know and I lament how much you have been afflicted of late, but I trust that returning health and spirits will now enable you to resume the pen, and delight us with your musings. I have still about a dozen Scotch and Irish airs that I wish “married to immortal verse.” We have several true-born Irishmen on the Scottish list; but they are now naturalized and reckoned our own good subjects: indeed, we have none better. I believe I before told you that I have been much urged by some friends to publish a collection of all our favorite airs and songs in octavo, embellished with a number of etchings of our ingenious friend Allan: what is your opinion of this?

[Burns had made a pause in his correspondence from June, 1795 to February, 1796; and Thomson feeling alarm, as much for the Poet's sake as for the “dozen of Scotch and Irish airs” which he wished “wedded to immortal verse,” wrote to make inquiries. Something in the tone of the letter, and the circumstance of pressing a sick man to write songs, seem to indicate that Thomson did not imagine that Burns was in a dangerous state. Nor is this surprising:—he was wildy gay or gloomily

downcast by fits and starts: Professor Walker, who had an interview with him in the latter end of the year, failed to perceive in his fiercest tone of conversation, and the almost convulsive resolution to abide by the wine, the presence of that twofold sickness of mind and body which was soon to carry him to the grave. He was, nevertheless, to use the words of a Scottish song,

“Fading in his place;”

and his wearing away was observed by all who took any interest in his fortunes.—ED.]

No. LXXXV.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

February, 17, 1796.

MANY thanks, my dear Sir, for your handsome, elegant present, to Mrs. Burns, and for my remaining volume of Peter Pindar.—Peter is a delightful fellow, and a first favorite of mine. I am much pleased with your idea of publishing a collection of our songs in octavo, with etchings. I am extremely willing to lend every assistance in my power. The Irish airs I shall cheerfully undertake the task of finding verses for.

I have, already, you know, equipt three with words, and the other day I strung up a kind of rhapsody to another Hibernian melody, which I admire much:—

HEY FOR A LASS WI' A TOCHER.

Tune—“*Balinamona Ora.*”

I.

Awa wi' your witchcraft o' beauty's alarms,
The slender bit beauty you grasp in your arms:
O, gie me the lass that has acres o' charms,
O, gie me the lass wi' the weel-stockit farms.

Then hey for a lass wi' a tocher,

Then hey for a lass wi' a tocher;

Then hey for a lass wi' a tocher,

The nice yellow guineas for me.

II.

Your beauty's a flower, in the morning that blows,
 And withers the faster, the faster it grows ;
 But the rapturous charm o' the bonnie green knowes,
 Ilk spring they're new deckit wi' bonnie white yowes.

III.

And e'en when this beauty your bosom has blest,
 The brightest o' beauty may cloy when possest ;
 But the sweet yellow darlings wi' Geordie imprest,
 The langer ye hae them—the mair they're carest.

Then hey for a lass wi' a tocher,

Then hey for a lass wi' a tocher ;

Then hey for a lass wi' a tocher,

The nice yellow guineas for me.

If this will do, you have now four of my Irish engagement. In my by-past songs, I dislike one thing ; the name Chloris—I meant it as the fictitious name of a certain lady ; but, on second thoughts, it is a high incongruity to have a Greek appellation to a Scottish pastoral ballad. Of this, and some things else, in my next : I have more amendments to propose.—What you once mentioned of “flaxen locks” is just : they cannot enter into an elegant description of beauty.—Of this also again—God bless you!

[Burns, it is believed, not only determined to remove Chloris with the flaxen tresses, and Anna with the golden locks, from his songs, but to eschew their allurements and avoid their company. He began, when it was too late, to perceive that, in erring against domestic ties and forsaking his household gods, he was sinning not only against his own fame, but furnishing his heart with matter for future repentance and remorse. In the complete revisal which he desired to give his songs, he had no wish to abate the humor or lessen even the occasional levities of expression in which he indulged. His aim appears to have been to change foreign names for native ones, and rely upon the Jeans, the Marys, the Phemies, the Ediths, and the Berthas of his own isle for exercising influence over the hearts of men. He

could not but feel, too, that some of his latter songs were written less from his own emotions than to accommodate the vacant airs with words : this had led him into repetitions of sentiment and imagery. Whatever his resolutions were respecting his songs or himself, he lived not to fulfil them.—ED.

No. LXXXVI.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

YOUR “Hey for a lass wi’ a tocher” is a most excellent song, and with you the subject is something new indeed. It is the first time I have seen you debasing the god of soft desire into an amateur of acres and guineas.

I am happy to find you approve of my proposed octavo edition. Allan has designed and etched about twenty plates, and I am to have my choice of them for that work. Independently of the Hogarthian humor with which they abound, they exhibit the character and costume of the Scottish peasantry with inimitable felicity. In this respect, he himself says, they will far exceed the aquatinta plates he did for the Gentle Shepherd, because in the etching he sees clearly what he is doing, but not so with the aquatinta, which he could not manage to his mind.

The Dutch boors of Ostade are scarcely more characteristic and natural than the Scottish figures in those etchings.

No. LXXXVII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

April, 1796.

ALAS! my dear Thomson, I fear it will be some time ere I tune my lyre again! “By Babel streams I have sat and wept,” almost ever since I wrote you

last: I have only known existence by the pressure of the heavy hand of sickness; and have counted time by the repercussions of pain! Rheumatism, cold, and fever have formed to me a terrible combination. I close my eyes in misery, and open them without hope. I look on the vernal day, and say with poor Fergusson—

“Say wherefore has an all-indulgent heaven
Light to the comfortless and wretched given?”

This will be delivered to you by a Mrs. Hyslop, landlady of the Globe Tavern here, which for these many years has been my howff, and where our friend Clarke and I have had many a merry squeeze. I am highly delighted with Mr. Allan's etchings. “Woo'd and married an' a',” is admirable! The grouping is beyond all praise. The expression of the figures, conformable to the story in the ballad, is absolutely faultless perfection. I next admire, “Turnimspike.” What I like least is, “Jenny said to Jocky.” Besides the female being in her appearance * * * * * if you take her stooping into the account, she is at least two inches taller than her lover. Poor Cleghorn! I sincerely sympathize with him! Happy I am to think that he yet has a well-grounded hope of health and enjoyment in this world. As for me—but that is a sad subject!

[The “howff” of which Burns speaks was a small, comfortable tavern, situated in the mouth of the Globe close, and it held at that time the rank as third among the houses of public accommodation in Dumfries. The excellence of the drink and the attentions of the proprietor were not, however, all its attractions; “Anna with the gowden locks” was one of the ministering damsels of the establishment: customers loved to be served by one who was not only cheerful, but whose charms were celebrated by the Bard of Kyle. On one of the last visits paid by the Poet, the wine of the “howff” was more than commonly strong—or, served by Anna, it went more glibly over than usual; and

when he rose to begone, he found he could do no more than keep his balance. The night was frosty and the hour late : the Poet sat down on the steps of a door between the tavern and his own house, fell asleep, and did not awaken till he was almost dead with cold. To this exposure his illness has been imputed ; and no doubt it contributed, with disappointed hope and insulted pride, to bring him to an early grave.—ED.]

No. LXXXVIII.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

4th May, 1796.

I NEED not tell you, my good Sir, what concern the receipt of your last gave me, and how much I sympathize in your sufferings. But do not, I beseech you, give yourself up to despondency, nor speak the language of despair. The vigor of your constitution, I trust, will soon set you on your feet again ; and then, it is to be hoped, you will see the wisdom and the necessity of taking due care of a life so valuable to your family, to your friends, and to the world.

Trusting that your next will bring agreeable accounts of your convalescence and returning good spirits, I remain, with sincere regard, yours.

P. S.—Mrs. Hyslop, I doubt not, delivered the gold seal to you in good condition.

[On this gold seal the Poet caused his coat of arms to be engraved :—*viz.*, a small bush ; a bird singing ; the legend “ wood-notes wild,” with the motto “ better hae a wee bush than nae bield.” This precious relic is now in the proper keeping of the Poet’s brother-in-law, Robert Armour, of Old ’Change, London.—ED.]

No. LXXXIX.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

MY DEAR SIR,

I ONCE mentioned to you an air which I have long admired: "Here's a health to them that's awa, hinney," but I forget if you took any notice of it. I have just been trying to suit it with verses; and I beg leave to recommend the air to your attention once more. I have only begun it.

JESSY.

Tune—"Here's a health to them that's awa."

I.

HERE's a health to ane I lo'e dear;
Here's a health to ane I lo'e dear;
'Thou art sweet as the smile when fond lovers meet,
And soft as their parting tear—Jessy!

II.

Altho' thou maun never be mine,
Altho' even hope is denied;
'Tis sweeter for thee despairing,
Than aught in the world beside—Jessy!

III.

I mourn through the gay, gaudy day,
As, hopeless, I muse on thy charms:
But welcome the dream o' sweet slumber,
For then I am lockt in thy arms—Jessy!

IV.

I guess by the dear angel smile,
I guess by the love-rolling e'e;
But why urge the tender confession
'Gainst fortune's fell cruel decree?—Jessy!

Here's a health to ane I lo'e dear ;
Here's a health to ane I lo'e dear ;
Thou art sweet as the smile when fond lovers meet,
And soft as their parting tear—Jessy !

[“ In the letter to Thomson,” says Currie, “ the three first stanzas only are given, and it was supposed that the Poet had gone no further : among his manuscripts, however, the fourth stanza was found which completes this exquisite song, the last finished offspring of his muse.” The heroine is Jessie Lewars, now Mrs. Thomson, of Dumfries : her tender attentions soothed the last days of the departing Poet, and if immortality in song can be considered a recompence, she has been rewarded.—ED.]

No. XC.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

THIS will be delivered by a Mr. Lewars, a young fellow of uncommon merit. As he will be a day or two in town, you will have leisure, if you choose, to write me by him ; and if you have a spare half hour to spend with him, I shall place your kindness to my account. I have no copies of the songs I have sent you, and I have taken a fancy to review them all, and possibly may mend some of them ; so, when you have complete leisure, I will thank you for either the originals or copies. I had rather be the author of five well-written songs than of ten otherwise. I have great hopes that the genial influence of the approaching summer will set me to rights, but as yet I cannot boast of returning health. I have now reason to believe that my complaint is a flying gout: a sad business !

Do let me know how Cleghorn is, and remember me to him.

This should have been delivered to you a month ago. I am still very poorly, but should like much to hear from you.

[It has already been intimated that Burns desired to reperuse and amend his songs. He began to feel that he was producing too many—and that he was introducing names which sounded strangely in native ears. With what success he would have carried on his scheme of emendation it is impossible to say. This letter was written on the 12th of July, and expresses some hope that summer heat would bring health to him: his letter to Johnson, on the 4th of the same month, is a melancholy one:—“You may probably think,” he says, “that for some time past I have neglected you and your work; but, alas! the hand of pain, and sorrow, and care has these many months lain heavy on me. Personal and domestic affliction have almost entirely banished that alacrity and life with which I used to woo the rural muse of Scotia. Many a merry meeting this publication has given us, and possibly it may give us more; though, alas! I fear it. This protracting slow-consuming illness which hangs over me will, I doubt much, my ever dear friend, arrest my sun before he has well nigh reached his middle career, and will turn o’er the Poet to far other and more important concerns than studying the brilliancy of wit, or the pathos of sentiment.”—ED.]

No. XCI.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

Brow, on the Solway-frith, 12th July, 1796.

AFTER all my boasted independence, curst necessity compels me to implore you for five pounds. A cruel wretch of a haberdasher, to whom I owe an account, taking it into his head that I am dying, has commenced a process, and will infallibly put me into jail. Do, for God’s sake, send me that sum, and that by return of post. Forgive me this earnestness, but the horrors of a jail have made me half distracted. I do

not ask all this gratuitously ; for, upon returning health, I hereby promise, and engage to furnish you with five pounds' worth of the neatest song-genius you have seen. I tried my hand on "Rothemurche" this morning. The measure is so difficult, that it is impossible to infuse much genius into the lines ; they are on the other side. Forgive, forgive me !

FAIREST MAID ON DEVON BANKS.

Tune—"Rothemurche."

I.

FAIREST maid on Devon banks,
Crystal Devon, winding Devon,
Wilt thou lay that frown aside,
And smile as thou were wont to do ?
Full well thou knows't I love thee, dear !
Could'st thou to malice lend an ear !
O ! did not love exclaim "Forbear,
Nor use a faithful lover so."

II.

Then come, thou fairest of the fair,
Those wonted smiles, O let me share ;
And by thy beauteous self I swear
No love but thine my heart shall know.
Fairest maid on Devon banks,
Crystal Devon, winding Devon,
Wilt thou lay that frown aside,
And smile as thou were wont to do ?

["These verses," says Currie, "and the letter enclosing them, are written in a character that marks the feeble state of Burns' bodily strength. Mr. Syme is of opinion that he could not have been in any danger of a jail at Dumfries, where certainly he had many firm friends, nor under any such necessity of imploring aid from Edinburgh. But about this time (nine days before his death), his reason began at times to be unset-

bled, and the horrors of a jail perpetually haunted his imagination." I have in the *Life of the Poet* asserted that he was in great poverty before he died, and that sometimes, in the course of the spring of 1796, his family were all but wanting bread. Those who say he had good friends around him seem not to know that he had a soul too proud to solicit help, and to forget that there are hearts in the world ready to burst before they beg. The five pounds for which he solicited Thomson were to meet the demands of David Williamson, to whom he owed the price of the cloth of his volunteer regimentals—the money should have been paid in April: and the ten pounds which he requested, and by return of post obtained, from his cousin, James Burness, grandfather of Lieutenant Burness, the Eastern Traveller, was for his wife, then about to be confined in child-bed. It is not known that he applied to any one else, and he would not have applied to either his cousin or to Thomson, had he not been sorely pressed: the fact of his being in want was known to all his neighbours and admitted by himself.

In this song—the last he was to measure in this world—his thoughts wandered to Charlotte Hamilton, and the banks of the Devon. Well might he exclaim:—

“Could'st thou to malice lend an ear?”—ED.]

No. XCII.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

14th July, 1796.

MY DEAR SIR,

EVER since I received your melancholy letters by Mrs. Hyslop, I have been ruminating in what manner I could endeavour to alleviate your sufferings. Again and again I thought of a pecuniary offer, but the recollection of one of your letters on this subject, and the fear of offending your independent spirit, checked my resolution. I thank you heartily, therefore, for the frankness of your letter of the 12th, and, with great pleasure, enclose a draft for the very sum I proposed sending. Would I were Chancellor of the Exchequer but for one day, for your sake!

Pray, my good Sir, is it not possible for you to muster a volume of poetry? If too much trouble to you, in the present state of your health, some literary friend might be found here, who would select and arrange from your manuscripts, and take upon him the task of editor. In the mean time it could be advertised to be published by subscription. Do not shun this mode of obtaining the value of your labor: remember Pope published the *Iliad* by subscription. Think of this, my dear Burns, and do not reckon me intrusive with my advice. You are too well convinced of the respect and friendship I bear you, to impute any thing I say to an unworthy motive. Yours faithfully.

The verses to "Rothemurche" will answer finely I am happy to see you can still tune your lyre.

[The dying Poet wrote entreatingly for five pounds, and Thomson sent the exact sum which he requested, from inability to send more: or, as he avers, from a dread of giving offence to the sensitive mind of Burns. It would have been as well had the sum been larger; but one cannot well see how Thomson deserved censure for doing that, and no more, which his correspondent requested him to do. Professor Walker, a man little inclined to irony, says that, on this subject, "the delicate mind of Mr. Thomson is at peace with itself."

"Therefore there need no more be said here."

Since this volume went to press, Mrs. Burns, the bonnie Jean of many an imperishable song, has passed from among us, and now lies side by side with "the plighted husband of her youth." She was a dutiful—nay, generous wife, an affectionate mother, and a good neighbour. One word of reproach was never uttered by her lips to Robert Burns: and when their narrowing fortunes required great economy, she was the first to propose that his illegitimate daughter should be taken under his roof. She treated the girl like one of her own. She sang Scottish songs with much grace and taste: she danced neatly and with spirit: though not much of a reader, she was conversant enough with Scottish poetry to enable her to talk about it: and though not gifted in the way that one might desire the wife of such a

poet to be, she was not without a ready answer to a forward speech.

It is to be lamented that, in raising the monument to the memory of Burns, it was found necessary to meddle with his grave: and it is more deeply to be regretted that, in interring his widow, his dust has been again disturbed. How the bright eyes of the illustrious poet would have lightened had he dreamed of such profanation! In his dying moments he was alarmed lest the awkward squad of volunteers would be employed to fire over him. Alas! that was not to be the worst.

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE.

THE letters of Burns extend over a large portion of his life : they are varied, vigorous, and characteristic. They are addressed to persons of almost all conditions : a few are to humble farmers and little lairds : some to village shopkeepers and parish schoolmasters : a number are to writers : not a few to clergymen : many to noblemen and ladies of beauty and rank, while a great variety are written to men of high literary eminence, such as the Tytlers, Blair, Stewart, Alison, and Moore. They contain much of the personal history of the Poet : exhibit numerous sketches of character, pictures of manners, and views of domestic life ; with many of those vivid touches and original sallies which communicate to prose the feeling and sentiment of poetry. Almost all the letters which Burns wrote will be found in this edition of his works : from that first humble one which he addressed to his father, on the darkness of his future prospects, till that last and most mournful one written to Mauchline, begging his mother-in-law to hasten to Dumfries, for that his wife was about to be confined, and he was himself dying.

Of the literary merits of these, in many instances, hurried compositions, various opinions have been expressed,—“The letters of Burns,” says Sir Walter Scott, “although containing passages of great elo-

quence, bear, occasionally, strong marks of affectation, with a tincture of pedantry, rather foreign to the Bard's character and education. They are written in various tones of feeling and modes of mind: in some instances exhibiting all the force of the writer's talents, in others only valuable because they bear his signature." Another critical judge has delivered a much sterner opinion.—"The prose works of Burns," says Jeffrey, "consist almost entirely of his letters. They bear, as well as his poetry, the seal and impress of his genius: but they contain much more bad taste, and are written with far more apparent labor. His poetry was almost all written primarily from feeling, and only secondarily from ambition. His letters seem to have been nearly all composed as exercises and for display. There are few of them written with simplicity or plainness: and, though natural enough as to the sentiment, they are, generally, very strained and elaborate in the expression. A very great proportion of them, too, relate neither to facts nor feelings peculiarly connected with the author or his correspondent, but are made up of general declamation, moral reflections, and vague discussions—all evidently composed for the sake of effect."

In the critic's almost wholesale condemnation of the prose of Burns, the world has not concurred: he sins, somewhat indeed, in the spirit of Jeffrey's description, but his errors are neither so serious nor so frequent as has been averred. In truth, his prose partakes largely of the character of his poetry: there is the same earnest vehemence of language: the same happy quickness of perception: the same mixture of the solemn with the sarcastic, and the humorous with the tender; and the presence everywhere of that ardent and penetrating spirit which sheds light and communicates importance to all it touches. He is occasionally turgid, it is true; neither is he so simple and

unaffected in prose as he is in verse : but this is more the fault of his education than of his taste. His daily language was the dialect of his native land ; and in that he expressed himself with almost miraculous clearness and precision : the language of his verse corresponds with that of his conversation ; but the etiquette of his day required his letters to be in English ; and in that, to him almost foreign tongue, he now and then moved with little ease or grace. Yet though a peasant, and laboring to express himself in a language alien to his lips, his letters yield not in interest to those of the ripest scholars of the age. He wants the colloquial ease of Cowper, but he is less minute and tedious : he lacks the withering irony of Byron, but he has more humor, and infinitely less of that “pibble prabble,” which deforms the noble lord’s correspondence and memoranda.

Wilson has, perhaps, expressed the truest opinion of all our critics concerning the letters of Burns, though he certainly errs when he says that the Poet wrote many of them when tipsy—nay, intoxicated. He belonged, indeed, to days of hard drinking : Pitt sometimes reeled when he rose to discourse on the state of the nation : Fox, it is averred, loved the bottle, though he contrived to stand steady ; and Sheridan, it is well known, perfumed his eloquence with wine. There is something like intoxication of feeling and sentiment in the letters of Burns ; but in the wildest of them sense and genius predominate.

“The letters of Burns,” observes Wilson, “are said to be too elaborate, the expression more studied and artificial than belongs to that species of composition. Now the truth is, Burns never considered letter writing ‘a species of composition’ subject to certain rules of taste and criticism. That had never occurred to him, and so much the better. But hundreds, even of his most familiar letters, are perfectly

ces most unhappy effects on my whole frame. Sometimes, indeed, when for an hour or two my spirits are alightened, I glimmer a little into futurity ; but my principal, and indeed my only pleasurable employment is looking backwards and forwards in a moral and religious way ; I am quite transported at the thought, that ere long, perhaps very soon, I shall bid an eternal adieu to all the pains, and uneasiness, and disquietudes of this weary life ; for I assure you I am heartily tired of it ; and if I do not very much deceive myself, I could contentedly and gladly resign it.

“The soul, uneasy, and confined at home,
Rests and expatiates in a life to come.”

It is for this reason I am more pleased with the 15th, 16th, and 17th verses of the 7th chapter of Revelations, than with any ten times as many verses in the whole Bible, and would not exchange the noble enthusiasm with which they inspire me for all that this world has to offer. As for this world, I despair of ever making a figure in it. I am not formed for the bustle of the busy, nor the flutter of the gay. I shall never again be capable of entering into such scenes. Indeed I am altogether unconcerned at the thoughts of this life. I foresee that poverty and obscurity probably await me, and I am in some measure prepared, and daily preparing to meet them. I have but just time and paper to return you my grateful thanks for the lessons of virtue and piety you have given me, which were too much neglected at the time of giving them, but which I hope have been remembered ere it is yet too late. Present my dutiful respects too my mother, and my compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Muir ; and with wishing you a merry New-Year's day, I shall conclude. I am, honored sir, your dutiful son,

ROBERT BURNES.

P. S. My meal is nearly out, but I am going to borrow till I get more.

[When Burns wrote this touching letter to his father, he was toiling as a heckler in his unfortunate flax speculation, a dull as well as a dusty employment. On the fourth day after it was penned, the Poet and his relation Peacock were welcoming in the new year: a lighted candle touched some flax, and there was an end to all their hopes. Tradition avers that some stern words of recrimination passed between the young men as the flame that devoured their all ascended.

Of William Burness, the father of the Poet, much has already been said: he was a worthy and pious man, desirous of maintaining right discipline in his house, and solicitous about the present and future welfare of his children. He was somewhat austere of manners: loved not boisterous jocularities: was rarely himself moved to laughter, and has been described as abstemious of speech. His early and continued misfortunes, though they saddened his brow, never affected the warm benevolence of his nature: he was liberal to the poor, and stern and self-denying only to himself. He is buried in Alloway kirk-yard, and his grave is visited by all who desire to pay homage to the fame of his eminent son.

It may be as well to say here, that Currie took some necessary liberties with the language of the letters. "But these corrections have never been extended," he observes, "to any habitual modes of expression of the Poet, even where his phraseology may seem to violate the delicacies of taste, or the idiom of our language, which he wrote in general with great accuracy." —Ed.]

No. II.

TO MR. JOHN MURDOCH,

SCHOOLMASTER,

STAPLES INN BUILDINGS, LONDON.

Lochlea, 15th January, 1783.

DEAR SIR,

As I have an opportunity of sending you a letter without putting you to that expense, which any production of mine would but ill repay, I embrace it with

pleasure, to tell you that I have not forgotten, nor ever will forget, the many obligations I lie under to your kindness and friendship.

I do not doubt, Sir, but you will wish to know what has been the result of all the pains of an indulgent father, and a masterly teacher ; and I wish I could gratify your curiosity with such a recital as you would be pleased with ; but that is what I am afraid will not be the case. I have, indeed, kept pretty clear of vicious habits ; and, in this respect, I hope, my conduct will not disgrace the education I have gotten ; but, as a man of the world, I am most miserably deficient. One would have thought that, bred as I have been, under a father, who has figured pretty well as *un homme des affaires*, I might have been, what the world calls, a pushing, active fellow ; but to tell you the truth, Sir, there is hardly any thing more my reverse. I seem to be one sent into the world, to see and observe ; and I very easily compound with the knave who tricks me of my money, if there be any thing original about him, which shows me human nature in a different light from any thing I have seen before. In short, the joy of my heart is to “study men, their manners, and their ways ;” and for this darling subject, I cheerfully sacrifice every other consideration. I am quite indolent about those great concerns that set the bustling, busy sons of care agog ; and if I have to answer for the present hour, I am very easy with regard to any thing further. Even the last, worst shift of the unfortunate and the wretched, does not much terrify me : I know that even then, my talent for what country folks call “a sensible crack,” when once it is sanctified by a hoary head, would procure me so much esteem, that even then—I would learn to be happy,* However, I am under no apprehensions about that ;

* The last shift alluded to here must be the condition of an itinerant beggar.

for though indolent, yet so far as an extremely delicate constitution permits, I am not lazy ; and in many things, especially in tavern matters, I am a strict economist ; not, indeed, for the sake of the money ; but one of the principal parts in my composition is a kind of pride of stomach ; and I scorn to fear the face of any man living : above every thing, I abhor as hell, the idea of sneaking in a corner to avoid a dun—possibly some pitiful, sordid wretch, who in my heart I despise and detest. 'Tis this, and this alone, that endears economy to me. In the matter of books, indeed, I am very profuse. My favorite authors are of the sentimental kind, such as Shenstone, particularly his "Elegies ;" Thomson ; "Man of Feeling"—a book I prize next to the Bible ; "Man of the World ;" Sterne, especially his "Sentimental Journey ;" Macpherson's "Ossian," &c. ; these are the glorious models after which I endeavour to form my conduct, and 'tis incongruous, 'tis absurd to suppose that the man whose mind glows with sentiments lighted up at their sacred flame—the man whose heart distends with benevolence to all the human race—he "who can soar above this little scene of things"—can he descend to mind the paltry concerns about which the terræfilial race fret, and fume, and vex themselves ! O how the glorious triumph swells my heart ! I forget that I am a poor, insignificant devil, unnoticed and unknown, stalking up and down fairs and markets, when I happen to be in them, reading a page or two of mankind, and "catching the manners living as they rise," whilst the men of business jostle me on every side, as an idle incumbrance in their way.—But I dare say I have by this time tired your patience ; so I shall conclude with begging you to give Mrs. Murdoch—not my compliments, for that is a mere commonplace story ; but my warmest, kindest wishes for her welfare ; and accept of the same for yourself, from,

Dear Sir, your's,—R. B.

[John Murdoch, as has already been intimated, kept the school of Lochlea, and instructed for a time the sons of William Burness. He was much of an enthusiast in his calling, and took delight in teaching such quick boys as the Poet and his brother: he was a frequent guest at the good man's fireside, and spent the hours of evening in profitable conversation, on poetry, history and religion. He removed to London, and maintained himself by his learning; nor was it without some surprise, it is said, that he first heard of his pupil's fame in poetry.—“Gilbert,” observes this discerning teacher, “always appeared to me to possess a more lively imagination, and to be more of a wit than Robert. I attempted to teach them a little church music; here they were left far behind by all the rest of the school. Robert's ear, in particular, was remarkably dull, and his voice untunable: his countenance was generally grave, and expressive of a serious, contemplative, and thoughtful mind. Gilbert's face said, ‘Mirth, with thee I mean to live:’ and certainly, if any person, who knew the two boys, had been asked which of them was most likely to court the muses, he would surely never have guessed that Robert had a propensity of that kind.” It would appear that good John Murdoch had no thoughts of answering his pupil's letter, till the stir made in the world about his genius recalled it to his mind. He lived to a good old age in London, loved to talk about William Burness and his wondrous son, and died a few years ago, respected and poor.—ED.]

No. III.

TO MR. JAMES BURNES,

WRITER, MONTROSE.*

Lochlea, 21st June, 1783,

DEAR SIR,

MY father received your favor of the 10th current, and as he has been for some months very poorly in

* This gentleman (the son of an elder brother of my father's), when he was very young, lost his father, and having discovered in his father's repositories some of my father's letters, he requested that the correspondence might be renewed. My father continued till the last year of his life to correspond with his nephew, and it

health, and is in his own opinion (and, indeed, in almost every body's else) in a dying condition, he has only, with great difficulty, written a few farewell lines to each of his brothers-in-law. For this melancholy reason, I now hold the pen for him to thank you for your kind letter, and to assure you, Sir, that it shall not be my fault if my father's correspondence in the north die with him. My brother writes to John Caird, and to him I must refer you for the news of our family.

I shall only trouble you with a few particulars relative to the wretched state of this country. Our markets are exceedingly high; oatmeal, *17d.* and *18d.* per peck, and not to be got even at that price. We have indeed been pretty well supplied with quantities of white peas from England and elsewhere, but that resource is likely to fail us, and what will become of us then, particularly the very poorest sort, Heaven only knows. This country, till of late, was flourishing incredibly in the manufacture of silk, lawn, and carpet weaving; and we are still carrying on a good deal in that way, but much reduced from what it was. We had also a fine trade in the shoe way, but now entirely ruined, and hundreds driven to a starving condition on account of it. Farming is also at a very low ebb with us. Our lands, generally speaking, are mountainous and barren; and our landholders, full of ideas of farming gathered from the English and the Lothians, and other rich soils in Scotland, make no allowance for the odds of the quality of land, and consequently stretch us much beyond what in the event we will be found able to pay. We are also much at a loss for want of proper methods in our improvements of

was afterwards kept up by my brother. Extracts from some of my brother's letters to his cousin, are introduced in this edition for the purpose of exhibiting the Poet before he had attracted the notice of the public, and in his domestic family relations afterwards.—GILBERT BURNS.]

farming. Necessity compels us to leave our old schemes, and few of us have opportunities of being well informed in new ones. In short, my dear Sir, since the unfortunate beginning of this American war, and its as unfortunate conclusion, this country has been, and still is, decaying very fast. Even in higher life, a couple of our Ayrshire noblemen, and the major part of our knights and squires are all insolvent. A miserable job of a Douglas, Heron, & Co.'s bank, which no doubt you heard of, has undone numbers of them; and imitating English and French, and other foreign luxuries and fopperies has ruined as many more. There is a great trade of smuggling carried along our coast, which, however destructive to the interests of the kingdom at large, certainly enriches this corner of it, but too often at the expense of our morals. However, it enables individuals to make, at least for a time, a splendid appearance; but Fortune, as is usual with her when she is uncommonly lavish of her favors, is generally even with them at the last; and happy were it for numbers of them if she would leave them no worse than when she found them.

My mother sends you a small present of a cheese, 'tis but a very little one, as our last year's stock is sold off; but if you could fix on any correspondent in Edinburgh or Glasgow, we would send you a proper one in the season. Mrs. Black promises to take the cheese under her care so far, and then to send it to you by the Stirling carrier.

I shall conclude this long letter with assuring you that I shall be very happy to hear from you, or any of our friends in your country, when opportunity serves.

My father sends you, probably for the last time in this world, his warmest wishes for your welfare and happiness; and my mother and the rest of the family desire to enclose their kind compliments to you, Mrs.

Burness, and the rest of your family, along with those of,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate Cousin,

R. B.

[James Burness, son of the Poet's uncle, lives at Montrose, and has seen fame come to his house in a two-fold way: viz. through his eminent cousin Robert, and, dearer still, through his own grandson, Lieutenant Burness, with whose talents and intrepidity the world is well acquainted. He is now, as may be surmised, descending into the vale of years; his faculties are still unimpaired, and his love of his own ancient name nothing lessened. He adheres—and we honor him for it—to the spelling of his ancestors; and is not at all pleased at the change made in the name; and even sighs, it is said, because his grandsons have adopted, in part, the Poet's modification.—ED.]

No. IV.

TO MISS E.

Lochlea, 1783.

I VERILY believe, my dear E., that the pure genuine feelings of love are as rare in the world as the pure genuine principles of virtue and piety. This I hope will account for the uncommon style of all my letters to you. By uncommon, I mean their being written in such a hasty manner, which to tell you the truth, has made me often afraid lest you should take me for some zealous bigot, who conversed with his mistress as he would converse with his minister. I don't know how it is, my dear, for though, except your company, there is nothing on earth gives me so much pleasure as writing to you, yet it never gives me those giddy raptures so much talked of among lovers. I have often thought that if a well-grounded affection be not really a part of virtue, 'tis something extremely akin to it.

Whenever the thought of my E. warms my heart, every feeling of humanity, every principle of generosity kindles in my breast. It extinguishes every dirty spark of malice and envy which are but too apt to infest me. I grasp every creature in the arms of universal benevolence, and equally participate in the pleasures of the happy, and sympathize with the miseries of the unfortunate. I assure you, my dear, I often look up to the Divine Disposer of events with an eye of gratitude for the blessing which I hope he intends to bestow on me in bestowing you. I sincerely wish that he may bless my endeavours to make your life as comfortable and happy as possible, both in sweetening the rougher parts of my natural temper, and bettering the unkindly circumstances of my fortune. This, my dear, is a passion, at least in my view, worthy of a man, and I will add worthy of a Christian. The solid earth-worm may profess love to a woman's person, whilst in reality his affection is centered in her pocket; and the slavish drudge may go a-wooing as he goes to the horse-market to choose one who is stout and firm, and as we may say of an old horse, one who will be a good drudge and draw kindly. I disdain their dirty, puny ideas. I would be heartily out of humor with myself, if I thought I were capable of having so poor a notion of the sex, which were designed to crown the pleasures of society. Poor devils! I don't envy them their happiness who have such notions. For my part I propose quite other pleasures with my dear partner.—R. B.

[This, and the three succeeding letters, were included in the first edition of the posthumous works of the Poet, but, for reasons which may be easily imagined, they were omitted in the following editions by Currie, nor were they restored by Gilbert Burns when his brother's works fell under his care. The name of the lady to whom they were addressed has not transpired: she was the heroine of several songs—of "Montgomery's

Peggy," of "Bonnie Peggy Alison," and of that still finer lyric commencing

"Now westlin winds and slaught'ring guns."

She was educated, the Bard himself tells us, more than what was then common among young women of her station: she was also distinguished for good sense as well as good looks. In the note on "Montgomery's Peggy," the Poet's account of his wooing and its indifferent success is given: he desired to show his talents in letter-writing as well as display his conversational eloquence in twilight walks and stolen interviews, and thought he was succeeding, "when she told me," said he, "one day in a flag of truce, that her fortress had been for some time the rightful property of another: but with the greatest friendship and politeness, she offered me every allowance except actual possession. I found out afterwards that what she told me of a previous engagement was really true, but it cost me some heart-aches to get rid of the affair." Currie gives these epistles to the twentieth year of Burns, and Lockhart inclines to the same period: but they seem to have been written during the year 1783: they are worthy of him in his best days: they are full of good sense and good feeling; and no doubt, "my dear E." marvelled to find the impassioned lover of "The cannie hour at e'en" so reasonable and sedate on paper.—ED.]

No. V.

TO THE SAME.

Lochlea, 1783.

MY DEAR E.,

I DO not remember, in the course of your acquaintance and mine, ever to have heard your opinion on the ordinary way of falling in love, amongst people of our station in life: I do not mean the persons who proceed in the way of bargain, but those whose affection is really placed on the person.

Though I be, as you know very well, but a very awkward lover myself, yet as I have some opportunities of observing the conduct of others who are much better skilled in the affair of courtship than I am, I

often think it is owing to lucky chance more than to good management, that there are not more unhappy marriages than usually are.

It is natural for a young fellow to like the acquaintance of the females, and customary for him to keep them company when occasion serves: some one of them is more agreeable to him than the rest; there is something, he knows not what, pleases him, he knows not how, in her company. This I take to be what is called love with the greater part of us; and I must own, my dear E., it is a hard game such a one as you have to play when you meet with such a lover. You cannot refuse but he is sincere, and yet though you use him ever so favorably, perhaps in a few months, or at farthest in a year or two, the same unaccountable fancy may make him as distractedly fond of another, whilst you are quite forgot. I am aware that perhaps the next time I have the pleasure of seeing you, you may bid me take my own lesson home, and tell me that the passion I have professed for you is perhaps one of those transient flashes I have been describing; but I hope, my dear E., you will do me the justice to believe me, when I assure you that the love I have for you is founded on the sacred principles of virtue and honor, and by consequence so long as you continue possessed of those amiable qualities which first inspired my passion for you, so long must I continue to love you. Believe me, my dear, it is love like this alone which can render the marriage state happy. People may talk of flames and raptures as long as they please, and a warm fancy, with a flow of youthful spirits, may make them feel something like what they describe; but sure I am the nobler faculties of the mind with kindred feelings of the heart, can only be the foundation of friendship, and it has always been my opinion that the married life was only friendship in a more exalted degree. If you will be so good

as to grant my wishes, and it should please Providence to spare us to the latest period of life, I can look forward and see that even then, though bent down with wrinkled age; even then, when all other worldly circumstances will be indifferent to me, I will regard my E. with the tenderest affection, and for this plain reason, because she is still possessed of these noble qualities, improved to a much higher degree, which first inspired my affection for her.

“O! happy state when souls each other draw,
When love is liberty, and nature law.”

I know were I to speak in such a style to many a girl, who thinks herself possessed of no small share of sense, she would think it ridiculous; but the language of the heart is, my dear E., the only courtship I shall ever use to you.

When I look over what I have written, I am sensible it is vastly different from the ordinary style of courtship, but I shall make no apology—I know your good nature will excuse what your good sense may see amiss.

R. B.

No. VI.

TO THE SAME.

Lochlea, 1783.

I HAVE often thought it a peculiar unlucky circumstance in love, that though in every other situation in life, telling the truth is not only the safest, but actually by far the easiest way of proceeding, a lover is never under greater difficulty in acting, or more puzzled for expression, than when his passion is sincere, and his intentions are honorable. I do not think that is very difficult for a person of ordinary capacity to talk of love and fondness, which are not felt, and to make

vows of constancy and fidelity, which are never intended to be performed, if he be villain enough to practise such detestable conduct: but to a man whose heart glows with the principles of integrity and truth, and who sincerely loves a woman of amiable person, uncommon refinement of sentiment and purity of manners—to such an one, in such circumstances, I can assure you, my dear, from my own feelings at this present moment, courtship is a task indeed. There is such a number of foreboding fears, and distrustful anxieties crowd into my mind when I am in your company, or when I sit down to write to you, that what to speak or what to write I am altogether at a loss.

There is one rule which I have hitherto practised, and which I shall invariably keep with you, and that is, honestly to tell you the plain truth. There is something so mean and unmanly in the arts of dissimulation and falsehood, that I am surprised they can be acted by any one in so noble, so generous a passion, as virtuous love. No, my dear E., I shall never endeavour to gain your favor by such detestable practices. If you will be so good and so generous as to admit me for your partner, your companion, your besom friend through life, there is nothing on this side of eternity shall give me greater transport; but I shall never think of purchasing your hand by any arts unworthy of a man, and I will add, of a Christian. There is one thing, my dear, which I earnestly request of you, and it is this; that you would soon either put an end to my hopes by a peremptory refusal, or cure me of my fears by a generous consent.

It would oblige me much if you would send me a line or two when convenient. I shall only add further that, if a behaviour regulated (though perhaps but very imperfectly) by the rules of honor and virtue, if a heart devoted to love and esteem you, and an earnest endeavour to promote your happiness; if

these are qualities you would wish in a friend, in a husband, I hope you shall ever find them in your real friend and sincere lover.

R. B.

No. VII.

TO THE SAME.

Lochlea, 1783.

I OUGHT, in good manners, to have acknowledged the receipt of your letter before this time, but my heart was so shocked with the contents of it, that I can scarcely yet collect my thoughts so as to write you on the subject. I will not attempt to describe what I felt on receiving your letter. I read it over and over, again and again, and though it was in the politest language of refusal, still it was peremptory ; “you were sorry you could not make me a return, but you wish me,” what, without you, I never can obtain, “you wish me all kind of happiness.” It would be weak and unmanly to say that, without you I never can be happy ; but sure I am, that sharing life with you would have given it a relish, that, wanting you, I can never taste.

Your uncommon personal advantages, and your superior good sense, do not so much strike me ; these, possibly, may be met with in a few instances in others ; but that amiable goodness, that tender feminine softness, that endearing sweetness of disposition, with all the charming offspring of a warm feeling heart—these I never again expect to meet with, in such a degree, in this world. All these charming qualities, heightened by an education much beyond any thing I have ever met in any woman I ever dared to approach, have made an impression on my heart that I do not

think the world can ever efface. My imagination has fondly flattered myself with a wish, I dare not say it ever reached a hope, that possibly I might one day call you mine. I had formed the most delightful images, and my fancy fondly brooded over them; but now I am wretched for the loss of what I really had no right to expect. I must now think no more of you as a mistress; still I presume to ask to be admitted as a friend. As such I wish to be allowed to wait on you, and as I expect to remove in a few days a little further off, and you, I suppose, will soon leave this place, I wish to see or hear from you soon; and if an expression should perhaps escape me, rather too warm for friendship, I hope you, will pardon it in, my dear Miss—(pardon me the dear expression for once) * * *

R. B.

No. VIII.

TO ROBERT RIDDEL, Esq.

MY DEAR SIR,

ON rummaging over some old papers I lighted on a MS. of my early years, in which I had determined to write myself out; as I was placed by fortune among a class of men to whom my ideas would have been nonsense. I had meant that the book should have lain by me, in the fond hope, that some time or other, even after I was no more, my thoughts would fall into the hands of somebody capable of appreciating their value. It sets off thus:—

“OBSERVATIONS, HINTS, SONGS, SCRAPS OF POETRY, &c. by ROBERT BURNES; a man who had little art in making money, and still less in keeping it; but was, however, a man of some sense, a great deal of honesty, and unbounded good-will to every crea-

ture, rational and irrational.—As he was but little indebted to scholastic education, and bred at a plough-tail, his performances must be strongly tinged with his unpolished, rustic way of life; but as I believe they are really his own, it may be some entertainment to a curious observer of human nature to see how a ploughman thinks, and feels, under the pressure of of love, ambition, anxiety, grief, with the like cares and passions, which, however diversified by the modes and manners of life, operate pretty much alike, I believe, on all the species.”

“ There are numbers in the world who do not want sense to make a figure, so much as an opinion of their own abilities to put them upon recording their observations, and allowing them the same importance which they do to those which appear in print.”—SHENSTONE.

“ Pleasing, when youth is long expired, to trace
The forms our pencil, or our pen designed!
Such was our youthful air, and shape, and face,
Such the soft image of our youthful mind.”—*Ibid.*

—
April, 1783.

Notwithstanding all that has been said against love, respecting the folly and weakness it leads a young inexperienced mind into; still I think it in a great measure deserves the highest encomiums that have been passed upon it. If any thing on earth deserves the name of rapture or transport, it is the feelings of green eighteen in the company of the mistress of his heart, when she repays him with an equal return of affection.

—
August.

There is certainly some connexion between love, and music, and poetry; and, therefore, I have always thought it a fine touch of nature, that passage in a modern love-composition:

“ As towards her cot he jogg’d along,
Her name was frequent in his song.”

For my own part I never had the least thought or inclination of turning poet till I got once heartily in love, and then rhyme and song were, in a manner the spontaneous language of my heart. The following composition was the first of my performances and done at an early period of life, when my heart glowed with honest warm simplicity; unacquainted and uncorrupted with the ways of a wicked world. The performance is, indeed, very puerile and silly; but I am always pleased with it, as it recalls to my mind those happy days when my heart was yet honest, and my tongue was sincere. The subject of it was a young girl who really deserved all the praises I have bestowed on her. I not only had this opinion of her then—but I actually think so still, now that the spell is long since broken, and the enchantment at an end.

Once I lov'd a bonnie lass.*

Lest my works should be thought below criticism; or meet with a critic who, perhaps, will not look on them with so candid and favorable an eye; I am determined to criticise them myself.

The first distich of the first stanza is quite too much in the flimsy strain of our ordinary street ballads; and, on the other hand, the second distich is too much in the other extreme. The expression is a little awkward, and the sentiment too serious. Stanza the second I am well pleased with; and I think it conveys a fine idea of that amiable part of the sex—the agreeable; or what in our Scotch dialect we call a sweet sonsy lass. The third stanza has a little of the flimsy turn in it; and the third line has rather too serious a cast. The fourth stanza is a very indifferent one; the first line is, indeed, all in the strain of the second stanza, but the rest is most expletive. The thoughts in the fifth stanza come finely up to my

* Vol. II., p. 226.

favorite idea—a sweet sonsy lass : the last line, however, halts a little. The same sentiments are kept up with equal spirit and tenderness in the sixth stanza : but the second and fourth lines ending with short syllables hurt the whole. The seventh stanza has several minute faults ; but I remember I composed it in a wild enthusiasm of passion, and to this hour I never recollect it but my heart melts, my blood sallies, at the remembrance.

September.

I entirely agree with that judicious philosopher, Mr. Smith, in his excellent Theory of Moral Sentiments, that remorse is the most painful sentiment that can embitter the human bosom. Any ordinary pitch of fortitude may bear up tolerably well under those calamities, in the procurement of which we ourselves have had no hand ; but when our own follies, or crimes, have made us miserable and wretched, to bear up with manly firmness, and at the same time have a proper penitential sense of our misconduct, is a glorious effort of self-command.

“ Of all the numerous ills that hurt our peace,
That press the soul, or wring the mind with anguish,
Beyond comparison the worst are those
That to our folly or our guilt we owe.
In every other circumstance, the mind
Has this to say—‘ It was no deed of mine ;’
But when to all the evil of misfortune
This sting is added—‘ Blame thy foolish self !’
Or worser far, the pangs of keen remorse ;
The torturing, gnawing, consciousness of guilt—
Of guilt, perhaps, where we’ve involved others ;
The young, the innocent, who fondly lov’d us,
Nay, more, that very love their cause of ruin !
O burning hell ! in all thy store of torments,
There’s not a keener lash !
Lives there a man so firm, who, while his heart
Feels all the bitter horrors of his crime,
Can reason down its agonizing throbs ;

And, after proper purpose of amendment,
Can firmly force his jarring thoughts to peace?
O, happy ! happy ! enviable man !
O glorious magnanimity of soul !”

March, 1784.

I have often observed, in the course of my experience of human life, that every man, even the worst, has something good about him ; though very often nothing else than a happy temperament of constitution inclining him to this or that virtue. For this reason, no man can say in what degree any other person, besides himself, can be, with strict justice, called wicked. Let any of the strictest character for regularity of conduct among us, examine impartially how many vices he has never been guilty of, not from any care or vigilance, but for want of opportunity, or some accidental circumstance intervening ; how many of the weaknesses of mankind he has escaped, because he was out of the line of such temptation ; and, what often, if not always, weighs more than all the rest, how much he is indebted to the world's good opinion, because the world does not know all : I say, any man who can thus think, will scan the failings, nay, the faults and crimes, of mankind around him, with a brother's eye.

I have often courted the acquaintance of that part of mankind, commonly known by the ordinary phrase of blackguards, sometimes farther than was consistent with the safety of my character ; those who, by thoughtless prodigality or headstrong passions, have been driven to ruin. Though disgraced by follies, nay, sometimes stained with guilt, I have yet found among them, in not a few instances, some of the noblest virtues, magnanimity, generosity, disinterested friendship, and even modesty.

April.

As I am what the men of the world, if they knew such a man, would call a whimsical mortal, I have various sources of pleasure and enjoyment, which are, in a manner, peculiar to myself, or some here and there such other out-of-the-way person. Such is the peculiar pleasure I take in the season of winter, more than the rest of the year. This, I believe, may be partly owing to my misfortunes giving my mind a melancholy cast: but there is something even in the—

“Mighty tempest, and the hoary waste

Abrupt and deep, stretch'd o'er the buried earth,”—

which raises the mind to a serious sublimity, favorable to every thing great and noble. There is scarcely any earthly object gives me more—I do not know if I should call it pleasure—but something which exalts me, something which enraptures me—than to walk in the sheltered side of a wood, or high plantation, in a cloudy winter-day, and hear the stormy wind howling among the trees, and raving over the plain. It is my best season for devotion: my mind is wrapt up in a kind of enthusiasm to Him, who, in the pompous language of the Hebrew bard, “walks on the wings of the wind.” In one of these seasons, just after a train of misfortunes, I composed the following:—

The wintry west extends his blast.*

Shenstone finely observes, that love-verses, writ without any real passion, are the most nauseous of all conceits; and I have often thought that no man can be a proper critic of love-composition, except he himself, in one or more instances, have been a warm votary of this passion. As I have been all along a miserable dupe to love, and have been led into a

* Vol. I. p. 289.

thousand weakness and follies by it, for that reason I put the more confidence in my critical skill, in distinguishing foppery and conceit from real passion and nature. Whether the following song will stand the test, I will not pretend to say, because it is my own; only I can say it was, at the time, genuine from the heart:—

Behind yon hills where Lugar flows.*

March, 1784.

There was a certain period of my life that my spirit was broke by repeated losses and disasters, which threatened, and indeed affected, the utter ruin of my fortune. My body, too, was attacked by that most dreadful distemper, a hypochondria, or confirmed melancholy. In this wretched state, the recollection of which makes me yet shudder, I hung my harp on the willow trees, except in some lucid intervals, in one of which I composed the following:—

O thou Great Being! what thou art.†

April.

The following song is a wild rhapsody, miserably deficient in versification; but as the sentiments are the genuine feelings of my heart, for that reason I have a particular pleasure in conning it over.

My father was a farmer

Upon the Carrick border.‡

I think the whole species of young men may be naturally enough divided into two grand classes,

* Vol. II. p. 246.

† Vol. I. p. 312.

‡ Vol. II. p. 230.

which I shall call the *grave* and the *merry*; though by the by, these terms do not with propriety enough express my ideas. The grave I shall cast into the usual division of those who are goaded on by the love of money, and those whose darling wish is to make a figure in the world. The merry are the men of pleasure of all denominations; the jovial lads, who have too much fire and spirit to have any settled rule of action; but, without much deliberation, follow the strong impulses of nature: the thoughtless, the careless, the indolent—in particular *he* who, with a happy sweetness of natural temper, and a cheerful vacancy of thought, steals through life—generally, indeed, in poverty and obscurity; but poverty and obscurity are only evils to him who can sit gravely down and make a repining comparison between his own situation and that of others; and lastly, to grace the quorum, such are, generally, those whose heads are capable of all the towerings of genius, and whose hearts are warmed with all the delicacy of feeling.

August.

The foregoing was to have been an elaborate dissertation on the various species of men; but as I cannot please myself in the arrangement of my ideas, I must wait till farther experience and nicer observation throw more light on the subject.—In the meantime I shall set down the following fragment, which, as it is the genuine language of my heart, will enable any body to determine which of the classes I belong to:—

There's nought but care on ev'ry han',
In ev'ry hour that passes, O.*

As the grand end of human life is to cultivate an

* Vol. II. p. 250.

intercourse with that BEING to whom we owe life, with every enjoyment that renders life delightful; and to maintain an integritive conduct towards our fellow-creatures; that so, by forming piety and virtue into habit, we may be fit members for that society of the pious and the good, which reason and revelation teach us to expect beyond the grave, I do not see that the turn of mind, and pursuits of such an one as the above verses describe—one who spends the hours and thoughts which the vocations of the day can spare with Ossian, Shakspeare, Thomson, Shenstone, Sterne, &c.; or, as the maggot takes him, a gun, a fiddle, or a song to make or mend; and at all times some heart's dear bonnie lass in view—I say I do not see that the turn of mind and pursuits of such an one are in the least more inimical to the sacred interests of piety and virtue, than the even lawful, bustling and straining after the world's riches and honors: and I do not see but he may gain heaven as well—which, by the by, is no mean consideration—who steals through the vale of life, amusing himself with every little flower that fortune throws in his way, as he, who straining straight forward, and perhaps spattering all about him gains some of life's little eminences, where, after all, he can only see and be seen a little more conspicuously than what, in the pride of his heart, he is apt to term the poor, indolent devil he has left behind him.

August.

A Prayer, when fainting fits, and other alarming symptoms of a pleurisy or some other dangerous disorder, which indeed still threatens me, first put nature on the alarm:—

O Thou unknown, Almighty Cause
Of all my hope and fear!*

EGOTISMS FROM MY OWN SENSATIONS.

May.

I don't well know what is the reason of it, but some how or other, though I am, when I have a mind, pretty generally beloved, yet, I never could get the art of commanding respect.—I imagine it is owing to my being deficient in what Sterne calls “that understrapping virtue of discretion.”—I am so apt to a *lapsus linguæ*, that I sometimes think the character of a certain great man I have read of somewhere is very much *apropos* to myself—that he was a compound of great talents and great folly.—N. B. To try if I can discover the causes of this wretched infirmity, and, if possible, to mend it.

August.

However I am pleased with the works of our Scotch poets, particularly the excellent Ramsay, and the still more excellent Fergusson, yet I am hurt to see other places of Scotland, their towns, rivers, woods, haughs, &c. immortalized in such celebrated performances, while my dear native country, the ancient bailleries of Carrick, Kyle, and Cunningham, famous both in ancient and modern times for a gallant and warlike race of inhabitants; a country where civil, and particularly religious liberty have ever found their first support, and their last asylum; a country, the birth-place of many famous philosophers, soldiers, and statesmen, and the scene of many important events recorded in Scottish history, particularly a great many of the actions of the glorious WALLACE, the SAVIOUR of his country; yet, we have never had one Scotch poet of any eminence, to make the fertile banks of Irvine, the romantic woodlands and sequestered scenes on Ayr, and the heathy mountainous source and winding sweep of Doon, emulate Tay, Forth, Ettrick, Tweed,

&c. This is a complaint I would gladly remedy, but, alas! I am far unequal to the task, both in native genius and education. Obscure I am, and obscure I must be, though no young poet, nor young soldier's heart, ever beat more fondly for fame than mine—

“And if there is no other scene of being
Where my insatiate wish may have its fill,—
This something at my heart that heaves for room,
My best, my dearest part, was made in vain.”

September.

There is a great irregularity in the old Scotch songs, a redundancy of syllables with respect to that exactness of accent and measure that the English poetry requires, but which glides in, most melodiously, with the respective tunes to which they are set. For instance, the fine old song of “The Mill, Mill, O,” to give it a plain, prosaic reading, it halts prodigiously out of measure; on the other hand, the song set to the same tune in Bremner's Collection of Scotch songs, which begins “To Fanny fair could I impart,” &c. it is most exact measure, and yet, let them both be sung before a real critic, one above the biasses of prejudice, but a thorough judge of nature,—how flat and spiritless will the last appear, how trite, and lamely methodical, compared with the wild-warbling cadence, the heart-moving melody of the first!—This is particularly the case with all those airs which end with a hypermetrical syllable. There is a degree of wild irregularity in many of the compositions and fragments which are daily sung to them by my compeers, the common people—a certain happy arrangement of old Scotch syllables, and yet very frequently nothing, not even like rhyme, or sameness of jingle, at the ends of the lines. This has made me sometimes imagine that, perhaps it might be possible for a Scotch poet, with a nice judicious ear, to set compositions to many of our

most favorite airs, particularly that class of them mentioned above, independent of rhyme altogether.

There is a noble sublimity, a heart-melting tenderness, in some of our ancient ballads, which show them to be the work of a masterly hand: and it has often given me many a heart-ache to reflect that such glorious old bards—bards who very probably owed all their talents to native genius, yet have described the exploits of heroes, the pangs of disappointment, and the meltings of love, with such fine strokes of nature—that their very names (O how mortifying to a bard's vanity!) are now “buried among the wreck of things which were.”

O ye illustrious names unknown! who could feel so strongly and describe so well: the last, the meanest of the muses' train—one who, though far inferior to your flights, yet eyes your path, and with trembling wing would sometimes soar after you—a poor rustic bard unknown, pays this sympathetic pang to your memory! Some of you tell us, with all the charms of verse, that you have been unfortunate in the world—unfortunate in love: he, too, has felt the loss of his little fortune, the loss of friends, and, worse than all, the loss of the woman he adored. Like you, all his consolation was his muse: she taught him in rustic measures to complain. Happy could he have done it with your strength of imagination and flow of verse! May the turf lie lightly on your bones! and may you now enjoy that solace and rest which this world rarely gives to the heart tuned to all the feelings of poesy and love!

September.

There is a fragment in imitation of an old Scotch song, well known among the country ingle sides.—

I cannot tell the name, neither of the song nor the tune, but they are in fine unison with one another.— By the way, these old Scottish airs are so nobly sentimental, that when one would compose to them, to “south the tune,” as our Scotch phrase is, over and over, is the readiest way to catch the inspiration, and raise the bard into that glorious enthusiasm so strongly characteristic of our old Scotch poetry. I shall here set down one verse of the piece mentioned above, both to mark the song and tune I mean, and likewise as a debt I owe to the author, as the repeating of that verse has lighted up my flame a thousand times :—

When clouds in skies do come together
To hide the brightness of the weather,
There will surely be some pleasant weather
When a' their storms are past and gone.*

Though fickle fortune has deceived me,
She promis'd fair and perform'd but ill ;
Of mistress, friends, and wealth bereav'd me,
Yet I bear a heart shall support me still.

I'll act with prudence as far's I'm able,
But if success I must never find,
Then come misfortune, I bid thee welcome,
I'll meet thee with an undaunted mind.

The above was an extempore, under the pressure of a heavy train of misfortunes, which, indeed, threatened to undo me altogether. It was just at the close of that dreadful period mentioned already, and though the weather has brightened up a little with me, yet there has always been since a tempest brewing round

* Alluding to the misfortunes he feelingly laments before this verse. (This is the author's note.)

me in the grim sky of futurity, which I pretty plainly see will some time or other, perhaps ere long, overwhelm me, and drive me into some doleful dell, to pine in solitary, squalid wretchedness.—However, as I hope my poor country muse, who, all rustic, awkward, and unpolished as she is, has more charms for me than any other of the pleasures of life beside—as I hope she will not then desert me, I may even then learn to be, if not happy, at least easy, and south a sang to sooth my misery.

'Twas at the same time I set about composing an air in the old Scotch style.—I am not musical scholar enough to prick down my tune properly, so it can never see the light, and perhaps 'tis no great matter; but the following were the verses I composed to suit it:—

O raging fortune's withering blast
Has laid my leaf full low, O!*

The tune consisted of three parts, so that the above verses just went through the whole air.

October, 1785.

If ever any young man, in the vestibule of the world, chance to throw his eye over these pages, let him pay a warm attention to the following observations, as I assure him they are the fruit of a poor devil's dear-bought experience.—I have literally, like that great poet and great gallant, and by consequence, that great fool, Solomon, “turned my eyes to behold madness and folly.” Nay, I have with all the ardor of a lively, fanciful, and whimsical imagination, ac-

* Vol. II. p. 227.

accompanied with a warm, feeling, poetic heart, shaken hands with their intoxicating friendship.

In the first place, let my pupil, as he tenders his own peace, keep up a regular, warm intercourse with the Deity. R. B.

[Some of these "Observations" were published by Currie in the Poet's Correspondence: Cromek properly ventured to print the whole.—"It has been the chief object," he observes, "in making this collection (The Reliques), not to omit any thing which might illustrate the character and feelings of the Bard at different periods of his life." Robert Riddel, the gentleman to whom he communicated the "Observations," was one of those steady friends whom his genius obtained for him. For his eye he wrote those remarks on Scottish song alluded to in this volume; and, indeed, on all occasions showed how much he loved his worth, his taste, and his learning. In these memoranda Burns complains that he could not learn the art of commanding respect.—"The following extract of a letter," says Cromek, "from his great and good biographer (Currie), who was an excellent judge of human character, bears an honorable testimony to the habitual firmness, decision, and independence of his mind which constitute the only solid basis of respectability:—'Burns was a very singular man in the strength and variety of his faculties. I saw him, and once only, in the year 1792. We conversed together for about an hour in the street of Dumfries, and engaged in some very animated conversation. We differed in our sentiments sufficiently to be rather vehemently engaged—and this interview gave me a more lively as well as forcible impression of his talents than any part of his writings. He was a great orator—an original and very versatile genius.'"—ED.]

No. IX.

TO JAMES BURNES,

MONTROSE.

Mossiel, August, 1784.

WE have been surprised with one of the most extraordinary phenomena in the moral world which, I

dare say, has happened in the course of this half century. We have had a party of Presbytery relief, as they call themselves, for some time in this country. A pretty thriving society of them has been in the burgh of Irvine for some years past, till about two years ago, a Mrs. Buchan from Glasgow came among them, and began to spread some fanatical notions of religion among them, and, in a short time, made many converts; and, among others, their preacher, Mr. Whyte, who, upon that account, has been suspended and formally deposed by his brethren. He continued, however, to preach in private to his party, and was supported, both he, and their spiritual mother, as they affect to call old Buchan, by the contributions of the rest, several of whom were in good circumstances; till, in spring last, the populace rose and mobbed Mrs. Buchan, and put her out of the town; on which, all her followers voluntarily quitted the place likewise, and with such precipitation, that many of them never shut their doors behind them; one left a washing on the green, another a cow bellowing at the crib without food or any body to mind her, and after several stages, they are fixed at present in the neighbourhood of Dumfries. Their tenets are a strange jumble of enthusiastic jargon; among others, she pretends to give them the Holy Ghost by breathing on them, which she does with postures and practices that are scandalously indecent; they have likewise disposed of all their effects, and hold a community of goods, and live nearly an idle life, carrying on a great farce of pretended devotion in barns and woods, where they lodge and lie all together, and hold likewise a community of women, as it is another of their tenets that they can commit no moral sin. I am personally acquainted with most of them, and I can assure you the above mentioned are facts.

This, my dear Sir, is one of the many instances of

the folly of leaving the guidance of sound reason and common sense in matters of religion.

Whenever we neglect or despise these sacred monitors, the whimsical notions of a perturbed brain are taken for the immediate influences of the Deity, and the wildest fanaticism, and the most inconstant absurdities, will meet with abettors and converts. Nay, I have often thought, that the more out-of-the way and ridiculous the fancies are, if once they are sanctified under the sacred name of religion, the unhappy mistaken votaries are the more firmly glued to them.

R. R.

[The Buchanites were a small community of enthusiasts, who believed the time to be at hand when there would neither be marriage nor giving in marriage—when the ground, instead of thistles and heather, would yield spontaneously the finest fruits—when all things under the sun would be in common—and “our lady,” so they called Mrs. Buchan, reign spiritual queen of the earth. At first they held the doctrine of immediate translation, but a night spent in wild prayer, wild song, and wilder sermons on the top of a cold hill rebuked this part of their belief: but strengthened them in the opinion regarding their empire on earth; and confirmed “our lady” in the resolution of making a tour through her imaginary dominions. She accordingly moved towards Nithsdale with all her people—some were in carts, some on horseback, and not a few on foot. She rode in front upon a white pony: and often halted to lecture them upon the loveliness of the land, and to cheer them with food from what she called her “Garner of mercy,” and with drink from a large cup called “The comforter.” She addressed all people as she passed along with much mildness, and spoke to them in the language of their callings. “James Macleish,” she said to a gardener, who went to see her, “quit Mr. Copland’s garden, and come and work in that of the Lord.—“ ‘Thank ye,’ answered James, “but he was na owre kind to the last gardener he had.” “Our lady” died at Archengibard-hill in Galloway, and her followers were dispersed—a few of the more resolute believers took a farm: the women span and made large quantities of linen; the men ploughed and sowed, and made articles of turnery—their lives were inoffensive and their manners gentle—they are now all dead and gone.—ED.]

No. X.

TO MISS ———.

MY DEAR COUNTRYWOMAN,

I AM so impatient to show you that I am once more at peace with you, that I send you the book I mentioned directly, rather than wait the uncertain time of my seeing you. I am afraid I have mislaid or lost Collins' Poems, which I promised to Miss Irvin. If I can find them, I will forward them by you ; if not, you must apologize for me.

I know you will laugh at it when I tell you that your piano and you together have played the deuce somehow about my heart. My breast has been widowed these many months, and I thought myself proof against the fascinating witchcraft ; but I am afraid you will "feelingly convince me what I am." I say, I am afraid, because I am not sure what is the matter with me. I have one miserable bad symptom ; when you whisper, or look kindly to another, it gives me a draught of damnation. I have a kind of wayward wish to be with you ten minutes by yourself, though what I would say, Heaven above knows, for I am sure I know not. I have no formed design in all this ; but just, in the nakedness of my heart, write you down a mere matter-of-fact story. You may perhaps give yourself airs of distance on this, and that will completely cure me ; but I wish you would not : just let us meet, if you please, in the old beaten way of friendship.

I will not subscribe myself your humble servant, for that is a phrase I think, at least fifty miles off from the heart ; but I will conclude with sincerely wishing that the Great Protector of innocence may shield you from the barbed dart of calumny, and hand you by the covert snare of deceit.

R. B.

["This letter," says Cromek, in his MS. Memoranda, "appears to have been written during the year 1784, and was probably addressed to the Peggy mentioned in the Poet's commonplace book."]

No. XI.

TO MR. JAMES BURNES,

MONTROSE.

Lochlea, 17th Feb. 1784.

DEAR COUSIN,

I WOULD have returned you my thanks for your kind favor of the 13th of December sooner, had it not been that I waited to give you an account of that melancholy event, which, for some time past, we have from day to day expected.

On the 13th current I lost the best of fathers. Though, to be sure, we have had long warning of the impending stroke; still the feelings of nature claim their part, and I cannot recollect the tender endearments and parental lessons of the best of friends and ablest of instructors, without feeling what perhaps the calmer dictates of reason would partly condemn.

I hope my father's friends in your country will not let their connexion in this place die with him. For my part I shall ever with pleasure—with pride, acknowledge my connexion with those who were allied by the ties of blood and friendship to a man whose memory I shall ever honor and revere.

I expect, therefore, my dear Sir, you will not neglect any opportunity of letting me hear from you, which will very much oblige,

My dear Cousin, yours sincerely,

R. B.

No. XII.

TO MR. JOHN RICHMOND,

EDINBURGH.

Mossgiel, Feb. 17, 1786.

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAVE not time at present to upbraid you for your silence and neglect; I shall only say I received yours with great pleasure. I have enclosed you a piece of rhyming ware for your perusal. I have been very busy with the muses since I saw you, and have composed, among several others, "The Ordination," a poem on Mr. M'Kinlay's being called to Kilmarnock; "Scotch Drink," a poem; "The Cotter's Saturday Night;" "An Address to the Devil," &c. I have likewise completed my poem on the "Dogs," but have not shown it to the world. My chief patron now is Mr. Aiken in Ayr, who is pleased to express great approbation of my works. Be so good as send me Fergusson, by Connel, and I will remit you the money. I have no news to acquaint you with about Mauchline, they are just going on in the old way. I have some very important news with respect to myself not the most agreeable—news that I am sure you cannot guess, but I shall give you the particulars another time. I am extremely happy with Smith; he is the only friend I have now in Mauchline. I can scarcely forgive your long neglect of me, and I beg you will let me hear from you regularly by Connel. If you would act your part as a friend, I am sure neither good nor bad fortune should strange or alter me. Excuse haste, as I got yours but yesterday.

I am, my dear Sir,

Yours,

R. B.

[To John Richmond we are indebted for some valuable information respecting the early days and works of the Poet of Ayrshire, for he was the companion of many of his evening hours, knew of all his poems and songs, and was acquainted with his outgoings and incomings among the dames of Kyle. Burns loved him for the frankness of his heart, and respected him for his learning, which was at least equal to what was required by a Writer in a country village. He is the sole survivor of all the Mauchline comrades of the Poet: resides in his native place, and rejoices in the fame of his friend.—ED.]

No. XIII.

TO MR. ROBERT MUIR,

KILMARNOCK.

Mossgiel, 20th March, 1786.

DEAR SIR,

I AM heartily sorry I had not the pleasure of seeing you as you returned through Mauchline; but as I was engaged, I could not be in town before the evening.

I here enclose you my “Scotch Drink,” and “may the —— follow with a blessing for your edification.” I hope, sometime before we hear the gowk, to have the pleasure of seeing you at Kilmarnock, when I intend we shall have a gill between us, in a mutchkin-stoup; which will be a great comfort and consolation to,

Dear Sir,

Your humble servant,

ROBERT BURNES.

[This is the last of the Poet's letters to which he has written his name according to the way of his ancestors: before this, however, he had sometimes signed it as it now appears; nay, he had ventured even to exhibit it modernized to his father. His poems were now about to go to the press, and he decided upon abiding by BURNS. I am indebted for this letter to the friendly hand of Mr. M'Crone, one of my publishers.—ED.]

No. XIV.

TO MR. M'WHINNIE,

WRITER, AYR.

Mossgiel, 17th April, 1786.

It is injuring some hearts, those hearts that elegantly bear the impression of the good Creator, to say to them you give them the trouble of obliging a friend : for this reason, I only tell you that I gratify my own feelings in requesting your friendly offices with respect to the enclosed, because I know it will gratify yours to assist me in it to the utmost of your power.

I have sent you four copies, as I have no less than eight dozen, which is a great deal more than I shall ever need.

Be sure to remember a poor poet militant in your prayers. He looks forward with fear and trembling to that, to him, important moment which stamps the die with—with—with, perhaps, the eternal disgrace of,

My dear Sir,

Your humble, afflicted, tormented,

ROBERT BURNS.

[Burns, in this letter, enclosed some subscription lists for the first edition of his poems. He had many friends in Ayrshire ; the Writers seem to have been active on his behalf. Mr. M'Whinnie not only subscribed himself, but induced others to do the same.—ED.]

No. XV.

TO MONS. JAMES SMITH,

MAUCHLINE.

Monday Morning, Mossgiel, 1786.

MY DEAR SIR,

I WENT to Dr. Douglas yesterday, fully resolved to take the opportunity of Captain Smith ; but I found

the Doctor with a Mr. and Mrs. White, both Jamaicans, and they have deranged my plans altogether. They assure him that to send me from Savannah la Mar to Port Antonio will cost my master, Charles Douglas, upwards of fifty pounds; besides running the risk of throwing myself into a pleuritic fever in consequence of hard travelling in the sun. On these accounts, he refuses sending me with Smith, but a vessel sails from Greenock the first of September, right for the place of my destination. The Captain of her is an intimate friend of Mr. Gavin Hamilton's, and as good a fellow as heart could wish: with him I am destined to go. Where I shall shelter, I know not, but I hope to weather the storm. Perish the drop of blood of mine that fears them! I know their worst, and am prepared to meet it:—

“I'll laugh, an' sing, an' shake my leg,
As lang's I dow.”

On Thursday morning, if you can muster as much self-denial as to be out of bed about seven o'clock, I shall see you as I ride through to Cumnock. After all, Heaven bless the sex! I feel there is still happiness for me among them:—

“O woman, lovely woman! Heaven designed you
To temper man!—we had been brutes without you!”

R. B.

[Of James Smith much has already been written: the Poet said he was small of stature, but large of soul; he was a joyous and witty person. Burns was a frequent visitor at his shop in Mauchline, and shared with him and John Richmond all his little secrets in rhyme and love. The world was not kinder to James than it was to Robert: his speculations in Scotland failed: he went to Jamaica with the hope of mending his fortune, and found an early grave.—ED.]

No. XVI.

TO MR. DAVID BRICE.

Mossgiel, June, 12, 1786.

DEAR BRICE,

I RECEIVED your message by G. Patterson, and as I am not very throng at present, I just write to let you know that there is such a worthless, rhyming reprobate, as your humble servant, still in the land of the living, though I can scarcely say, in the place of hope. I have no news to tell you that will give me any pleasure to mention, or you to hear.

Poor ill-advised, ungrateful Armour came home on Friday last. You have heard all the particulars of that affair, and a black affair it is. What she thinks of her conduct now, I don't know ; one thing I do know—she has made me completely miserable. Never man loved, or rather adored a woman more than I did her ; and, to confess a truth between you and me, I do still love her to distraction after all, though I won't tell her so if I were to see her, which I don't want to do. My poor dear unfortunate Jean ! how happy have I been in thy arms ! It is not the losing her that makes me so unhappy, but for her sake I feel most severely : I foresee she is in the road to, I am afraid, eternal ruin.

May Almighty God forgive her ingratitude and perjury to me, as I from my very soul forgive her ; and may his grace be with her and bless her in all her future life ! I can have no nearer idea of the place of eternal punishment, than what I have felt in my own breast on her account. I have tried often to forget her ; I have run into all kinds of dissipation and riots, mason-meetings, drinking matches, and other mischief, to drive her out of my head, but all in vain. And now for a grand cure ; the ship is on her way home that is to take me out to Jamaica ; and then, farewell dear old Scotland ! and farewell dear ungrateful Jean ! for never, never will I see you more.

You will have heard that I am going to commence poet in print; and to-morrow my works go to the press. I expect it will be a volume of about two hundred pages—it is just the last foolish action I intend to do; and then turn a wise man as fast as possible.

Believe me to be, dear Brice,

Your friend and well-wisher,

R. B.

[David Brice was a shoemaker, and, like most of his craft, shrewd and intelligent. He shared with Smith and Richmond the confidence of the Poet in love matters, and seems to have been fully acquainted with all the particulars which inspired that melancholy poem "The Lament." He was working in Glasgow when he received this letter: his name disappears from the Poet's correspondence in 1786.—ED.]

No. XVII.

TO MR. ROBERT AIKEN.

Ayrshire, 1786.

SIR,

I WAS with Wilson, my printer, t'other day, and settled all our by-gone matters between us. After I had paid him all demands, I made him the offer of the second edition, on the hazard of being paid out of the first and readiest, which he declines. By his account, the paper of a thousand copies would cost about twenty-seven pounds, and the printing about fifteen or sixteen: he offers to agree to this for the printing, if I will advance for the paper, but this, you know, is out of my power; so farewell hopes of a second edition 'till I grow richer! an epocha which, I think, will arrive at the payment of the British national debt.

There is scarcely any thing hurts me so much in being disappointed of my second edition, as not having it in my power to show my gratitude to Mr. Ballan-

tine, by publishing my poem of "The Brigs of Ayr." I would detest myself as a wretch, if I thought I were capable in a very long life of forgetting the honest, warm and tender delicacy with which he enters into my interests. I am sometimes pleased with myself in my grateful sensations; but I believe, on the whole, I have very little merit in it, as my gratitude is not a virtue, the consequence of reflection; but sheerly the instinctive emotion of my heart, too inattentive to allow worldly maxims and views to settle into selfish habits.

I have been feeling all the various rotations and movements within, respecting the excise. There are many things plead strongly against it; the uncertainty of getting soon into business; the consequences of my follies, which may perhaps make it impracticable for me to stay at home; and besides I have for some time been pining under secret wretchedness, from causes which you pretty well know—the pang of disappointment, the sting of pride, with some wandering stabs of remorse, which never fail to settle on my vitals like vultures, when attention is not called away by the calls of society, or the vagaries of the muse. Even in the hour of social mirth, my gaiety is the madness of an intoxicated criminal under the hands of the executioner. All these reasons urge me to go abroad, and to all these reasons I have only one answer—the feelings of a father. This, in the present mood I am in, overbalances every thing that can be laid in the scale against it.

You may perhaps think it an extravagant fancy, but it is a sentiment which strikes home to my very soul: though skeptical in some points of our current belief, yet, I think, I have every evidence for the reality of a life beyond the stunted bourne of our present existence; if so, then, how should I, in the presence of that tremendous Being, the Author of existence, how

should I meet the reproaches of those who stand to me in the dear relation of children whom I deserted in the smiling innocency of helpless infancy? O, thou great unknown Power! thou Almighty God! who has lighted up reason in my breast, and blessed me with immortality!—I have frequently wandered from that order and regularity necessary for the perfection of thy works, yet thou hast never left me nor forsaken me!

Since I wrote the foregoing sheet, I have seen something of the storm of mischief thickening over my folly-devoted head. Should you, my friends, my benefactors, be successful in your applications for me, perhaps it may not be in my power in that way, to reap the fruit of your friendly efforts. What I have written in the preceding pages, is the settled tenor of my present resolution; but should inimical circumstances forbid me closing with your kind offer, or enjoying it only threaten to entail farther misery——

To tell the truth, I have little reason for complaint; as the world, in general, has been kind to me fully up to my deserts. I was, for some time past, fast getting into the pining, distrustful snarl of the misanthrope. I saw myself alone, unfit for the struggle of life, shrinking at every rising cloud in the chance-directed atmosphere of fortune, while, all defenceless, I looked about in vain for a cover. It never occurred to me, at least never with the force it deserved, that this world is a busy scene, and man, a creature destined for a progressive struggle; and that, however I might possess a warm heart and inoffensive manners (which last, by the by, was rather more than I could well boast); still more than these passive qualities, there was something to be done. When all my schoolfellows and youthful compeers (those misguided few excepted who joined, to use a Gentoo phrase, the “hallachores” of the human race) were striking off

with eager hope and earnest intent, in some one or other of the many paths of busy life, I was "standing idle in the market-place," or only left the chace of the butterfly from flower to flower, to haunt fancy from whim to whim.

You see, Sir, that if to know one's errors were a probability of mending them, I stand a fair chance: but, according to the reverend Westminster divines, though conviction must precede conversion, it is very far from always implying it.

R. B.

[This letter was written under distress of mind, occasioned by the Poet's separation from Mrs. Burns. Robert Aiken to whom it is addressed, was one of the Bard's best patrons: he praised his performances and encouraged him to persevere in song, when friends were few, and the world far from smiling. By inscribing to him "The Cotter's Saturday Night," Burns paid a compliment—a merited one—to the accuracy of his taste and the rectitude of his life. But the patron and the Poet were of different opinions regarding the situation in which he stood with Jean Armour—opposition begat coldness—and they became for a time at least, estranged.—ED.]

No. XVIII.

TO [it is believed] JOHN BALLANTINE,

OF AYR.

HONORED SIR,

My proposals came to hand last night, and knowing that you would wish to have it in your power to do me a service as early as any body, I enclose you half a sheet of them. I must consult you, first opportunity, on the propriety of sending my quondam friend, Mr. Aiken, a copy. If he is now reconciled to my character as an honest man, I would do it with all my soul; but I would not be beholden to the no-

blest being ever God created, if he imagined me to be a rascal. Apropos, old Mr. Armour prevailed with him to mutilate that unlucky paper yesterday. Would you believe it? though I had not a hope, nor even a wish, to make her mine after her conduct; yet, when he told me the names were all out of the paper, my heart died within me, and he cut my veins with the news. Perdition seize her falsehood! R. B.

[Here we have a plain account of the destruction of the marriage-lines between the Poet and his Jean: her father consulted Mr. Aiken, and, in consequence of his advice, tore their names away from the certificate.—ED.]

No. XIX.

TO MR. DAVID BRICE,

SHOEMAKER, GLASGOW.

Mossgiel, 17th July, 1786.

I HAVE been so throng printing my Poems, that I could scarcely find as much time as to write to you. Poor Armour is come back again to Mauchline, and I went to call for her, and her mother forbade me the house, nor did she herself express much sorrow for what she has done. I have already appeared publicly in church, and was indulged in the liberty of standing in my own seat. I do this to get a certificate as a bachelor, which Mr. Auld has promised me. I am now fixed to go for the West Indies in October. Jean and her friends insisted much that she should stand along with me in the kirk, but the minister would not allow it, which bred a great trouble I assure you, and I am blamed as the cause of it, though I am sure I am innocent; but I am very much pleased, for all that, not to have had her company. I have no news to tell

you that I remember. I am really happy to hear of your welfare, and that you are so well in Glasgow. I must certainly see you before I leave the country, I shall expect to hear from you soon, and am,

Dear Brice,

Yours,—R. B.

[Had Jean Armour been left to the guidance of her own heart, the story of her early years would have been less sorrowful.—Ed.]

No. XX.

TO MR. JOHN RICHMOND.

Old Rome Forest, 30th July, 1786.

MY DEAR RICHMOND,

My hour is now come—you and I will never meet in Britain more. I have orders, within three weeks at farthest, to repair aboard the Nancy, Captain Smith, from Clyde, to Jamaica, and to call at Antigua. This, except to our friend Smith, whom God long preserve, is a secret about Mauchline. Would you believe it? Armour has got a warrant to throw me in jail till I find security for an enormous sum. This they keep a entire secret, but I got it by a channel they little dream of; and I am wandering from one friend's house to another, and, like a true son of the gospel, “have no where to lay my head.” I know you will pour an execration on her head, but spare the poor ill-advised girl, for my sake; though may all the furies that rend the injured, enraged lover's bosom, await her mother until her latest hour! I write in a moment of rage, reflecting on my miserable situation—exiled, abandoned, forlorn. I can write no more—let me hear from you by the return of coach. I will write you ere I go.

I am, dear Sir,

Yours, here and hereafter,

R. B.

[The Poet, when he wrote this letter, was skulking from Carrick to Kyle, and from Kyle to Carrick: "some ill-advised persons," he said, had uncoupled the merciless pack of the law at his heels." But Mr. Armour had no wish to detain him till he found bail: he was desirous that he should leave the country; and to accomplish this, he had recourse to the law. These are painful but necessary explanations.—ED.]

No. XXI.

TO MR. ROBERT MUIR,

KILMARNOCK.

Mossgiel, Friday noon.

MY FRIEND, MY BROTHER,

WARM recollection of an absent friend presses so hard upon my heart, that I send him the prefixed bagatelle (The Calf,) pleased with the thought that it will greet the man of my bosom, and be a kind of distant language of friendship.

You will have heard that poor Armour has repaid me double. A very fine boy and a girl have awakened a thought and feelings that thrill, some with tender pressure and some with foreboding anguish, through my soul.

The poem was nearly an extemporaneous production, on a wager with Mr. Hamilton, that I would not produce a poem on the subject in a given time.

If you think it worth while, read it to Charles and Mr. W. Parker, and if they choose a copy of it, it is at their service, as they are men whose friendship I shall be proud to claim, both in this world and that which is to come.

I believe all hopes of staying at home will be abortive, but more of this when, in the latter part of next week, you shall be troubled with a visit from,

My dear Sir,

Your most devoted,

R. B.

[Robert Muir of Kilmarnock was a constant and kind friend to the Poet: he promoted his interest in his own wide circle of acquaintance, and set the world an example by subscribing for forty copies of the Edinburgh edition of his poems.—ED.]

No. XXII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP,

OF DUNLOP.

Ayrshire, 1786.

MADAM,

I AM truly sorry I was not at home yesterday, when I was so much honored with your order for my copies, and incomparably more by the handsome compliments you are pleased to pay my poetic abilities. I am fully persuaded that there is not any class of mankind so feelingly alive to the titillations of applause as the sons of Parnassus: nor is it easy to conceive how the heart of the poor bard dances with rapture, when those, whose character in life gives them a right to be polite judges, honor him with their approbation. Had you been thoroughly acquainted with me, Madam, you could not have touched my darling heart-chord more sweetly than by noticing my attempts to celebrate your illustrious ancestor, the Saviour of his Country.

“Great patriot hero ! ill requited chief!”

The first book I met with in my early years, which I perused with pleasure, was, “The Life of Hannibal;” the next was, “The History of Sir William Wallace:” for several of my earlier years I had few other authors; and many a solitary hour have I stole out, after the laborious vocations of the day, to shed a tear over their glorious, but unfortunate stories. In those boyish days I remember, in particular, being struck with that part of Wallace’s story where these lines occur—

“Syne to the Leglen wood, when it was late,
To make a silent and a safe retreat.”

I chose a fine summer Sunday, the only day my line of life allowed, and walked half a dozen of miles to pay my respects to the Leglen wood, with as much devout enthusiasm as ever pilgrim did to Loretto ; and, as I explored every den and dell where I could suppose my heroic countrymen to have lodged, I recollect (for even then I was a rhymers) that my heart glowed with a wish to be able to make a song on him in some measure equal to his merits. R. B.

[Mrs. Dunlop exercised a two-fold influence over the muse of Burns : she was a poetess, and had the blood of the Wallaces in her veins. Her taste and station gave her great power in the west : she praised the Poet wherever she went, and addressed letters to him remarkable not only for their good sense and good feeling, but for a spirit of charity and toleration not common in those feverish times. She now and then, indeed, introduced not a few of her own verses into her correspondence ; but she seems not to have been greedy of praise, nor to have resented her friend's want of courtesy when he forgot to commend her musings. Though not much, perhaps of a poetess, she was a true and steady friend, and never got into a fit of “superfine passion” at the Poet's imputed heresies, moral and political. She lived to a good old age : had the satisfaction to see the ancient spirit of the Wallaces revive, in her son the General, and to know that Scotland revered her for her unchanging kindness to the equally accomplished and unfortunate Burns.—ED.]

No. XXIII.

TO MISS ALEXANDER.

Mossiel, 18th Nov. 1786.

MADAM,

POETS are such outré beings, so much the children of wayward fancy and capricious whim, that I believe the world generally allows them a larger latitude in

the laws of propriety, than the sober sons of judgment and prudence. I mention this as an apology for the liberties that a nameless stranger has taken with you in the enclosed poem, which he begs leave to present you with. Whether it has poetical merit any way worthy of the theme, I am not the proper judge ; but it is the best my abilities can produce ; and what to a good heart will, perhaps, be a superior grace, it is equally sincere as fervent.

The scenery was nearly taken from real life, though I dare say, Madam, you do not recollect it, as I believe you scarcely noticed the poetic *reueur* as he wandered by you. I had roved out as chance directed, in the favorite haunts of my muse, on the banks of the Ayr, to view nature in all the gaiety of the vernal year. The evening sun was flaming over the distant western hills ; not a breath stirred the crimson opening blossom, or the verdant spreading leaf. It was a golden moment for a poetic heart. I listened to the feathered warblers, pouring their harmony on every hand with a congenial kindred regard, and frequently turned out of my path, lest I should disturb their little songs, or frighten them to another station. Surely, said I to myself, he must be a wretch indeed, who, regardless of your harmonious endeavour to please him, can eye, your elusive flights to discover your secret recesses, and to rob you of all the property nature gives you—your dearest comforts, your helpless nestlings. Even the hoary hawthorn twig that shot across the way, what heart at such a time but must have been interested in its welfare, and wished it preserved from the rudely browsing-cattle, or the withering eastern blast ? Such was the scene,—and such the hour, when in a corner of my prospect, I spied one of the fairest pieces of nature's workmanship that ever crowned a poetic landscape or met a poet's eye, those visionary bards excepted, who hold commerce with

aërial beings! Had Calumny and Villany taken my walk, they had at that moment sworn eternal peace with such an object.

What an hour of inspiration for a poet! It would have raised plain dull historic prose into metaphor and measure.

The enclosed song was the work of my return home; and perhaps it but poorly answers what might have been expected from such a scene.

I have the honor to be,

Madam,

Your most obedient and very
humble servant,

R. B.

[In the life of the Poet, and in the note to the song which this letter accompanied, much has been said about the "Bonnie Lass of Ballochmyle." The best excuse which can well be offered for her silence and coldness, is that she lived to see how much she wronged her own fame and beauty in not accepting the honors which the muse had paid her, and to make such reparation as was in her power by regarding the original copy of the song as an heir-loom of the house of Alexander. The braes of Ballochmyle are now visited like the braes of Yarrow and the broom of the Cowden-Knowes, by poetic pilgrims, and the scene is eagerly pointed out where the Poet saw the fair vision which inspired him.—ED.]

No. XXIV.

TO MRS. STEWART,

OF STAIR.

1786.

MADAM,

THE hurry of my preparations for going abroad has hindered me from performing my promise so soon as I intended. I have here sent you a parcel of songs,

&c., which never made their appearance, except to a friend or two at most. Perhaps some of them may be no great entertainment to you, but of that I am far from being an adequate judge. The song to the tune of "Ettrick Banks" [The bonnie lass of Ballochmyle] you will easily see the impropriety of exposing much, even in manuscript. I think, myself, it has some merit: both as a tolerable description of one of nature's sweetest scenes, a July evening; and one of the finest pieces of nature's workmanship, the finest indeed we know any thing of, an amiable, beautiful young woman;* but I have no common friend to procure me that permission, without which I would not dare to spread the copy.

I am quite aware, Madam, what task the world would assign me in this letter. The obscure bard, when any of the great condescend to take notice of him, should heap the altar with the incense of flattery. Their high ancestry, their own great and god-like qualities and actions, should be recounted with the most exaggerated description. This, Madam, is a task for which I am altogether unfit. Besides a certain disqualifying pride of heart, I know nothing of your connexions in life, and have no access to where your real character is to be found—the company of your compeers: and more, I am afraid that even the most refined adulation is by no means the road to your good opinion.

One feature of your character I shall ever with grateful pleasure remember;—the reception I got when I had the honor of waiting on you at Stair. I am little acquainted with politeness, but I know a good deal of benevolence of temper and goodness of heart. Surely did those in exalted stations know how happy they could make some classes of their inferiors

* Miss Alexander.

by condescension and affability, they would never stand so high, measuring out with every look the height of their elevation, but condescend as sweetly as did Mrs. Stewart of Stair. R. B.

[Mrs. Stewart of Stair, afterwards of Afton, was the first person of note who had the sagacity to discover in the Ayrshire ploughman a genius of the first order. Two or three of his songs were sufficient for this: it has already been related how his heart fluttered and his natural boldness forsook him as he walked through the rooms of the "towers of Stair" to see the fair owner for the first time. It is to be regretted that the political impetuosity of Burns, which increased much as he advanced in life, should have found vent in sarcastic sayings and sneering lampoons. Mrs. Stewart remonstrated mildly with the Poet concerning these transgressions, and told him that they furnished many with a pretext for not aiding him in his views in life, and even threw suspicion on the principles of his steadiest friends. Something like a coolness followed this: but, though Burns was nettled, he omitted no opportunity of intimating, how much he felt indebted to her, for her early kindness and cheering condescension.—ED.]

No. XXV.

IN THE NAME OF THE NINE. *Amen.*

WE, Robert Burns, by virtue of a warrant from Nature, bearing date the twenty-fifth day of January, Anno Domini one thousand seven hundred and fifty-nine,* Poet Laureat, and Bard in Chief, in and over the districts and countries of Kyle, Cunningham, and Carrick, of old extent, To our trusty and well-beloved William Chalmers and John M'Adam, students and practitioners in the ancient and mysterious science of confounding right and wrong.

* His birth day.

RIGHT TRUSTY,

Be it known unto you that whereas in the course of our care and watchings over the order and police of all and sundry the manufacturers, retainers, and venders of poesy ; bards, poets, poetasters, rhymers, jinglers, songsters, ballad-singers, &c. &c. &c. &c. male and female—We have discovered a certain nefarious, abominable, and wicked song or ballad, a copy whereof We have here enclosed ; Our Will therefore is, that ye pitch upon and appoint the most execrable individual of that most execrable species, known by the appellation, phrase, and nickname of the Deil's Yeld Nowte : and after having caused him to kindle a fire at the Cross of Ayr, ye shall, at noontide of the day put into the said wretch's merciless hands the said copy of the said nefarious and wicked song, to be consumed by fire in the presence of all beholders, in abhorrence of, and terrorem to, all such compositions and composers. And this in nowise leave ye undone, but have it executed in every point as this our mandate bears, before the twenty-fourth current, when in person We hope to applaud your faithfulness and zeal.

Given at Mauchline this twentieth day of November, Anno Domini one thousand seven hundred and eighty-six.

God save the Bard !

[The "song or ballad" enclosed was "Holy Willie's Prayer." "The deil's yeld nowte" has several meanings : it usually denotes old bachelors, and this is the interpretation of Currie ; but Gilbert Burns says it is a scoffing appellation sometimes given to sheriffs' officers, and other executors of the law, and it is in that sense his brother has used it.—ED.]

No. XXVI.

TO MR. ROBERT MUIR.

Mossgiel, 18th Nov. 1786.

MY DEAR SIR,

ENCLOSED you have "Tam Samson," as I intend to print him. I am thinking for my Edinburgh expedition on Monday or Tuesday, come se'nnight, for pos. I will see you on Tuesday first.

I am ever,

Your much indebted,

R. B.

[The Edinburgh expedition was undertaken in consequence of the following letter, written by a critic and a poet, Thomas Blacklock, to the Rev. Mr. Lawrie, who communicated it to Gavin Hamilton, by whom it was shown to Burns :—

"I ought to have acknowledged your favor long ago, not only as a testimony of your kind remembrance, but as it gave me an opportunity of sharing one of the finest, and, perhaps, one of the most genuine entertainments, of which the human mind is susceptible. A number of avocations retarded my progress in reading the poems ; at last, however, I have finished that pleasing perusal. Many instances have I seen of nature's force and beneficence, exerted under numerous and formidable disadvantages ; but none equal to that with which you have been kind enough to present me. There is a pathos and delicacy in his serious poems ; a vein of wit and humor in those of a more festive turn, which cannot be too much admired, nor too warmly approved ; and I think I shall never open the book without feeling my astonishment renewed and increased. It was my wish to have expressed my approbation in verse ; but whether from declining life, or a temporary depression of spirits, it is at present out of my power to accomplish that agreeable intention.

Mr. Stewart, professor of morals in this university, had formerly read me three of the poems, and I had desired him to get my name inserted among the subscribers : but whether this was done or not I never could learn. I have little intercourse with Dr. Blair, but will take care to have the poems communicated to him by the intervention of some mutual friend. It has been

told me by a gentleman to whom I showed the performances, and who sought a copy with diligence and ardor, that the whole impression is already exhausted. It were therefore much to be wished for the sake of the young man, that a second edition, more numerous than the former, could immediately be printed as it appears certain that its intrinsic merit, and the exertion of the author's friends, might give it a more universal circulation than any thing of the kind which has been published within my memory."—ED.]

No. XXVII.

TO DR. MACKENZIE,

MAUCHLINE ;

ENCLOSING HIM VERSES ON DINING WITH LORD DAER.

Wednesday Morning.

DEAR SIR,

I NEVER spent an afternoon among great folks with half that pleasure as when, in company with you, I had the honor of paying my devoirs to that plain, honest, worthy man, the professor. [Dugald Stewart.] I would be delighted to see him perform acts of kindness and friendship, though I were not the object ; he does it with such a grace. I think his character, divided into ten parts, stands thus—four parts Socrates—four parts Nathaniel—and two parts Shakspeare's Brutus.

The foregoing verses were really extempore, but a little corrected since. They may entertain you a little with the help of that partiality with which you are so good as to favor the performances of,

Dear Sir,

Your very humble Servant,

R. B.

[The kind and venerable Dr. Mackenzie is now, save John Richmond, the sole survivor of the friends whom Burns numbered in the west. To him we are indebted for much valuable information respecting the household of William Burness, and the youthful days of the Poet. He introduced Burns to Dugald Stewart and others, and sought to extend his fame and put him on the way to fortune.—ED.]

No. XXVIII.

TO GAVIN HAMILTON, Esq.

MAUCHLINE.

Edinburgh, Dec. 7th, 1786.

HONORED SIR,

I HAVE paid every attention to your commands, but can only say what perhaps you will have heard before this reach you, that Muirkirklands were bought by a John Gordon, W. S., but for whom I know not; Mauchlands, Haugh, Miln, &c., by a Frederick Fotheringham, supposed to be for Ballochmyle Laird, and Adam-hill and Shawood were bought for Oswald's folks.—This is so imperfect an account, and will be so late ere it reach you, that were it not to discharge my conscience I would not trouble you with it; but after all my diligence I could make it no sooner nor better.

For my own affairs, I am in a fair way of becoming as eminent as Thomas à Kempis or John Bunyan; and you may expect henceforth to see my birth-day inserted among the wonderful events, in the poor Robin's and Aberdeen Almanacks, along with the black Monday, and the battle of Bothwellbridge.—My Lord Glencairn and the Dean of Faculty, Mr. H. Erskine, have taken me under their wing; and by all probability I shall soon be the tenth worthy, and the eighth wise man of the world. Through my lord's influence it is

inserted in the records of the Caledonian Hunt, that they universally, one and all, subscribe for the second edition.—My subscription bills come out to-morrow and you shall have some of them next post.—I have met, in Mr. Dalrymple, of Orangefield, what Solomon emphatically calls “A friend that sticketh closer than a brother.”—The warmth with which he interests himself in my affairs is of the same enthusiastic kind which you, Mr. Aiken, and the few patrons that took notice of my earlier poetic days showed for the poor unlucky devil of a poet.

I always remember Mrs. Hamilton and Miss Kennedy in my poetic prayers, but you both in prose and verse.

May cauld ne'er catch you but a hap,
Nor hunger but in plenty's lap!

Amen!

R. B.

[Gavin Hamilton was a gentleman of old descent, and, what the Poet prized more, a person of wit and talent. At his table Burns was a frequent guest, and flashes of humor and snatches of joyous song, with good wine, lent wings to the longest nights. It is true that the Bard sat long at the table, and it is also true that he hesitated not to fall in love with Mrs. Hamilton's servant maids: but dreigh drinking was, in those days, regarded as a mark of a man's affection for his neighbour; and as for an hour's love and daffing with the lasses, it was expected;—a young fellow was set down as a sumph if he hesitated.]

No. XXIX.

TO JOHN BALLANTINE, Esq.,

BANKER, AYR.

Edinburgh, 13th Dec. 1786.

MY HONORED FRIEND,

I WOULD not write you till I could have it in my power to give you some account of myself and my

matters, which by the by is often no easy task.—I arrived here on Tuesday was se'nnight, and have suffered ever since I came to town with a miserable headache and stomach complaint, but am now a good deal better.—I have found a worthy warm friend in Mr. Dalrymple, of Orangefield, who introduced me to Lord Glencairn, a man whose worth and brotherly kindness to me, I shall remember when time shall be no more.—By his interest it is passed in the “Caledonian Hunt,” and entered in their books, that they are to take each a copy of the second edition for which they are to pay one guinea.—I have been introduced to a good many of the *noblesse*, but my avowed patrons and patronesses are, the Duchess of Gordon—the Countess of Glencairn, with my Lord, and Lady Betty*—the Dean of Faculty—Sir John Whitefoord.—I have likewise warm friends among the literati; Professors Stewart, Blair, and Mr. Mackenzie—the Man of Feeling.—An unknown hand left ten guineas for the Ayrshire bard with Mr. Sibbald, which I got.—I since have discovered my generous unknown friend to be Patrick Miller, Esq., brother to the Justice Clerk; and drank a glass of claret with him by invitation at his own house yesternight. I am nearly agreed with Creech to print my book, and I suppose I will begin on Monday. I will send a subscription bill or two, next post; when I intend writing my first kind patron, Mr. Aiken. I saw his son to-day, and he is very well.

Dugald Stewart, and some of my learned friends, put me in the periodical paper called the *Lounger*,† a copy of which I here enclose you.—I was, Sir, when I was first honored with your notice, too obscure; now I tremble lest I should be ruined by being dragged too suddenly into the glare of polite and learned observation.

* Lady Betty Cunningham.

† The paper here alluded to was written by Mr. Mackenzie, the celebrated author of “The Man of Feeling.”

I shall certainly, my ever-honored patron, write you an account of my every step ; and better health and more spirits may enable me to make it something better than this stupid matter-of-fact epistle.

I have the honor to be,

Good Sir,

Your ever grateful humble servant,

R. B.

If any of my friends write me, my direction is, care of Mr. Creech, bookseller.

[To John Ballantine the Poet not only addressed "The Brigs of Ayr," but resorted to him for good advice, when the clouds of misfortune darkened above him, and fortune, in his own words, used him hard and sharp. He was a good and a wise man, and improved much the "Auld town of Ayr" during the period of his provostship. It would appear by this letter that the Poet was in some degree reconciled to Mr. Aiken : it seems not to have been cordial, for he is no longer numbered among his correspondents.—ED.]

No. XXX.

TO MR. ROBERT MUIR.

Edinburgh, Dec. 20th, 1786.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I HAVE just time for the carrier to tell you that I received your letter ; of which I shall say no more but what a lass of my acquaintance said of her bastard wean ; she said she "did na ken wha was the father exactly, but she suspected it was some o' thae bonny blackguard smugglers, for it was like them." So I only say your obliging epistle was like you. I enclose you a parcel of subscription bills. Your affair of sixty copies is also like you ; but it would not be like me to comply.

Your friend's notion of my life has put a crotchet in my head of sketching it in some future epistle to you. My compliments to Charles and Mr. Parker.

R. B.

[The kindness and generosity of Robert Muir, of Kilmar-nock, were not unfelt by the Poet ; and we must accept it as a proof of Burns' powers of pleasing that he acquired, so early in life, the regard of so many western worthies. In this letter we have the first intimation of that account of himself which he afterwards wrote and addressed to Dr. Moore, and we also have satisfactory evidence of the substantial patronage of his Ayr-shire friends.—ED.]

No. XXXI.

TO MR. WILLIAM CHALMERS,

WRITER, AYR.

Edinburgh, Dec. 27th, 1786.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I CONFESS I have sinned the sin for which there is hardly any forgiveness—ingratitude to friendship—in not writing you sooner ; but of all men living, I had intended to have sent you an entertaining letter ; and by all the plodding, stupid powers, that in nodding, conceited majesty, preside over the dull routine of business—a heavily-solemn oath this!—I am, and have been, ever since I came to Edinburgh, as unfit to write a letter of humor, as to write a commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine, who was banished to the Isle of Patmos, by the cruel and bloody Domitian, son to Vespasian and brother to Titus, both emperors of Rome, and who was himself an emperor, and raised the second or third persecution, I forget which, against the Christians, and after throwing the said Apostle John, brother to the Apostle

James, commonly called James the Greater, to distinguish him from another James, who was, on some account or other, known by the name of James the Less—after throwing him into a caldron of boiling oil, from which he was miraculously preserved, he banished the poor son of Zebedee to a desert island in the Archipelago, where he was gifted with the second sight, and saw as many wild beasts as I have seen since I came to Edinburgh; which, a circumstance not very uncommon in story-telling, brings me back to where I set out.

To make you some amends for what, before you reach this paragraph, you will have suffered, I enclose you two poems I have carded and spun since I past Glenbuck.

One blank in the Address to Edinburgh—"Fair B——," is heavenly Miss Burnet, daughter to Lord Monboddo, at whose house I have had the honor to be more than once. There has not been anything nearly like her in all the combinations of beauty, grace, and goodness the great Creator has formed, since Milton's Eve on the first day of her existence.

My direction is—care of Andrew Bruce, merchant, Bridge-street. R B.

[Burns taxed his muse to propitiate with song lady of the west, to whom William Chalmers was paying his addresses: the success of the verse is not known: those who desire to see how the Poet acquitted himself may turn to Vol. I. page 496.—ED.]

No. XXXII.

TO THE EARL OF EGLINTON.

Edinburgh, January, 1787.

MY LORD,

As I have but slender pretensions to philosophy, I cannot rise to the exalted ideas of a citizen of the world, but have all those national prejudices, which I believe glow peculiarly strong in the breast of a Scotchman. There is scarcely any thing to which I am so feelingly alive as the honor and welfare of my country : and, as a poet, I have no higher enjoyment than singing her sons and daughters. Fate had cast my station in the veriest shades of life ; but never did a heart pant more ardently than mine to be distinguished ; though till very lately I looked in vain on every side for a ray of light. It is easy then to guess how much I was gratified with the countenance and approbation of one of my country's most illustrious sons, when Mr. Wauchope called on me yesterday on the part of your lordship. Your munificence, my lord, certainly deserves my very grateful acknowledgments ; but your patronage is a bounty peculiarly suited to my feelings. I am not master enough of the etiquette of life to know, whether there be not some impropriety in troubling your lordship with my thanks, but my heart whispered me to do it. From the emotions of my inmost soul I do it. Selfish ingratitude I hope I am incapable of ; and mercenary servility, I trust, I shall ever have so much honest pride as to detest.

R. B.

[When the Poet exclaimed, in his " Earnest Cry and Prayer,"

" O could I like Montgomeries fight,
Or gab like Boswell,"

he included Archibald, eleventh earl of Eglinton, and Colonel Hugh Montgomery of Coilsfield, afterwards twelfth earl, in the

compliment. This was repaid by subscribing for forty-two copies of the Poet's works and a promise of patronage. One curious in the history of human nature might inquire, whether, when Burns limited his friend Muir's subscription to forty copies, he had not the noble earl's honor in his eye. Boswell seems not, though a native of the banks of Lugar, to have relished his portion of the compliment: he did not subscribe, neither has he once alluded to Burns or his genius throughout all his writings.—ED.]

No. XXXIII.

TO JOHN BALLANTINE, Esq.

Edinburgh, Jan. 14, 1787.

MY HONORED FRIEND,

It gives me a secret comfort to observe in myself that I am not yet so far gone as Willie Gaw's Skate, "past redemption;"* for I have still this favorable symptom of grace, that when my conscience, as in the case of this letter, tells me I am leaving something undone that I ought to do, it teazes me eternally till I do it.

I am still "dark as was Chaos" in respect to futurity. My generous friend, Mr. Patrick Miller, has been talking with me about a lease of some farm or other in an estate called Dalswinton, which he has lately bought near Dumfries. Some life rented embittering recollections whisper me that I will be happier any where than in my old neighbourhood, but Mr. Miller is no judge of land; and though I dare say he means to favor me, yet he may give me, in his opinion, an advantageous bargain that may ruin me. I am to take a tour by Dumfries as I return, and have promised to meet Mr. Miller on his lands some time in May.

* This is one of a great number of old saws that Burns, when a lad, had picked up from his mother, of which the good old woman had a vast collection.

I went to a mason-lodge yesternight, where the most Worshipful Grand Master Chartres, and all the Grand Lodge of Scotland visited. The meeting was numerous and elegant; all the different lodges about town were present, in all their pomp. The Grand Master, who presided with great solemnity and honor to himself as a gentleman and mason, among other general toasts, gave "Caledonia, and Caledonia's Bard, Brother Burns," which rung through the whole assembly with multiplied honors and repeated acclamations. As I had no idea such a thing would happen, I was downright thunderstruck, and, trembling in every nerve, made the best return in my power. Just as I had finished, some of the grand officers said, so loud that I could hear, with a most comforting accent "Very well indeed!" which set me something to rights again.

I have to-day corrected my 152d page. My best good wishes to Mr. Aiken.

I am ever,
Dear Sir,
Your much indebted humble Servant,
R. B.

No. XXXIV.

TO THE SAME.

January, —, 1787.

WHILE here I sit, sad and solitary, by the side of a fire in a little country inn, and drying my wet clothes, in pops a poor fellow of a sodger, and tells me he is going to Ayr. By heavens! say I to myself, with a tide of good spirits which the magic of that sound, Auld Toon o' Ayr, conjured up, I will send my last song to Mr. Ballantine. Here it is—

Ye flowery banks o' bonnie Doon,
How can ye blume sae fair ;
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
And I sae fu' o' care !*

[The Editor has not hesitated to insert all letters which intimate what Burns was musing on as a poet, or planning as a man.—ED.]

No. XXXV.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Edinburgh, 15th January, 1787.

MADAM,

YOURS of the 9th current, which I am this moment honored with, is a deep reproach to me for ungrateful neglect. I will tell you the real truth, for I am miserably awkward at a fib—I wished to have written to Dr. Moore before I wrote to you ; but, though every day since I received yours of December 30th, the idea, the wish to write to him, has constantly pressed on my thoughts, yet I could not for my soul set about it. I know his fame and character, and I am one of “the sons of little men.” To write him a mere matter-of-fact affair, like a merchant's order, would be disgracing the little character I have ; and to write the author of “The View of Society and Manners” a letter of sentiment—I declare every artery runs cold at the thought. I shall try, however, to write to him to-morrow or next day. His kind interposition in my behalf I have already experienced, as a gentleman waited on me the other day, on the part of Lord Eglinton, with ten guineas, by way of subscription for two copies of my next edition.

The word you object to in the mention I have made of my glorious countryman and your immortal ancestor, is indeed borrowed from Thomson; but it does not strike me as an improper epithet. I distrusted my own judgment on your finding fault with it, and applied for the opinion of some of the literati here, who honor me with their critical strictures, and they all allow it to be proper. The song you ask I cannot recollect, and I have not a copy of it. I have not composed any thing on the great Wallace, except what you have seen in print; and the enclosed, which I will print in this edition.* You will see I have mentioned some others of the name. When I composed my "Vision" long ago, I had attempted a description of Kyle, of which the additional stanzas are a part, as it originally stood. My heart glows with a wish to be able to do justice to the merits of the "Saviour of his Country," which sooner or later I shall at least attempt.

You are afraid I shall grow intoxicated with my prosperity as a poet; alas! Madam, I know myself and the world too well. I do not mean any airs of affected modesty; I am willing to believe that my abilities deserve some notice; but in a most enlightened, informed age and nation, when poetry is and has been the study of men of the first natural genius aided with all the powers of polite learning, polite books and polite company—to be dragged forth to the full glare of learned and polite observation, with all my imperfections of awkward rusticity and crude unpolished ideas on my head—I assure you, Madam, I do not dissemble when I tell you I tremble for the consequences. The novelty of a poet in my obscure situation, without any of those advantages which are reckoned, necessary for that character, at least at this time of day, has raised a partial tide of public notice which has

* Stanzas in the "Vision," Vol. I., page 379, beginning "By stately tower or palace fair," and ending with the first Duan.

borne me to a height, where I am absolutely, feelingly certain, my abilities are inadequate to support me; and too surely do I see that time when the same tide will leave me, and recede, perhaps, as far below the mark of truth. I do not say this in the ridiculous affectation of self-abasement and modesty. I have studied myself, and know what ground I occupy; and, however a friend or the world may differ from me in that particular, I stand for my own opinion, in silent resolve, with all the tenaciousness of property. I mention this to you once for all to disburthen my mind, and I do not wish to hear or say more about it.—But,

“When proud fortune’s ebbing tide recedes,”

you will bear me witness, that when my bubble of fame was at the highest, I stood unintoxicated, with the inebriating cup in my hand, looking forward with rueful resolve to the hastening time, when the blow of Calumny should dash it to the ground, with all the eagerness of vengeful triumph.

Your patronizing me and interesting yourself in my fame and character as a poet, I rejoice in; it exalts me in my own idea; and whether you can or cannot aid me in my subscription is a trifle. Has a paltry subscription-bill any charms to the heart of a bard, compared with the patronage of the descendant of the immortal Wallace?

R. B.

No. XXXVI.

TO DR. MOORE.

Edinburgh, Jan., 1787.

SIR,

MRS. DUNLOP has been so kind as to send me extracts of letters she has had from you, where you do the rustic bard the honor of noticing him and his

works. Those who have felt the anxieties and solitudes of authorship, can only know what pleasure it gives to be noticed in such a manner, by judges of the first character. Your criticisms, Sir, I receive with reverence: only I am sorry they mostly came too late: a peccant passage or two that I would certainly have altered, were gone to the press.

The hope to be admired for ages is, in by far the greater part of those even who are authors of repute, an unsubstantial dream. For my part, my first ambition was, and still my strongest wish is, to please my compeers, the rustic inmates of the hamlet, while ever-changing language and manners shall allow me to be relished and understood. I am very willing to admit that I have some poetical abilities; and as few, if any, writers, either moral or poetical, are intimately acquainted with the classes of mankind among whom I have chiefly mingled, I may have seen men and manners in a different phasis from what is common, which may assist originality of thought. Still I know very well the novelty of my character has by far the greatest share in the learned and polite notice I have lately had: and in a language where Pope and Churchill have raised the laugh, and Shenstone and Gray have drawn the tear; where Thomson and Beattie have painted the landscape, and Lyttleton and Collins described the heart, I am not vain enough to hope for distinguished poetic fame.

R. B.

[To the accomplished Dr. Moore the Poet seems to have unbosomed himself more than to most of his patronizing friends. Nor is this to be wondered at—Moore was not only a fine scholar and a man of genius, but he was one of the kindest and most accessible of mankind. Burns seems to have possessed a natural tact for discovering how far he might go in laying his bosom bare to his companions and correspondents, and he certainly hit, as if by inspiration, the character of Dr. Moore, who,

with the secrecy of a physician, and the prudence of a friend, received the communications of the rustic bard, read to the London literati such portions of the Poet's letters as he knew would be most relished : quoted the finest passages of his poems, and spread his fame with a diligence which could only arise from a hearty appreciation of his great merit. The following letter was written to Burns, Jan. 23d, 1787 : it is dated from Clifford street, London :—

“ SIR :—I have just received your letter, by which I find I have reason to complain of my friend Mrs. Dunlop, for transmitting to you extracts from my letters to her, by much too freely and too carelessly written for your perusal. I must forgive her, however, in consideration of her good intention, as you will forgive me, I hope, for the freedom I use with certain expressions, in consideration of my admiration of the poems in general. If I may judge of the author's disposition from his works, with all the other good qualities of a poet, he has not the irritable temper ascribed to that race of men by one of their own number, whom you have the happiness to resemble in ease and curious felicity of expression. Indeed, the poetical beauties, however original and brilliant, and lavishly scattered, are not all I admire in your works ; the love of your native country, that feeling sensibility to all the objects of humanity, and the independent spirit which breathes through the whole, give me a most favorable impression of the Poet, and have made me often regret that I did not see the poems, the certain effect of which would have been my seeing the author, last summer, when I was longer in Scotland than I have been for many years.

“ I rejoice very sincerely at the encouragement you receive at Edinburgh, and I think you peculiarly fortunate in the patronage of Dr. Blair, who I am informed interests himself very much for you. I beg to be remembered to him ; nobody can have a warmer regard for that gentleman than I have, which, independent of the worth of his character, would be kept alive by the memory of our common friend, the late Mr. George B——e.

“ Before I received your letter, I sent enclosed in a letter to ———, a sonnet by Miss Williams, a young poetical lady, which she wrote on reading your ‘ Mountain-daisy ;’ perhaps it may not displease you :—

“ ‘ While soon ‘ the garden's flaunting flowers’ decay,
And scatter'd on the earth neglected lie,
The ‘ Mountain-daisy,’ cherish'd by the ray
A poet drew from heaven, shall never die.

Ah, like that lonely flower the poet rose !
 'Mid penury's bare soil and bitter gale ;
 He felt each storm that on the mountain blows,
 Nor ever knew the shelter of the vale.
 By genius in her native vigor nurst,
 On nature with impassion'd look he gazed ;
 Then through the cloud of adverse fortune burst
 Indignant, and in light unborrow'd blazed.
 Scotia ! from rude affliction shield thy bard ;
 His heaven taught numbers Fame herself will guard.'

" I have been trying to add to the numbers of your subscribers, but find many of my acquaintance are already among them. I have only to add, that with every sentiment of esteem, and the most cordial good wishes,

" I am

" Your obedient humble servant,

" J. MOORE."—ED.]

No. XXXVII.

TO THE REV. G. LOWRIE,

NEWMILLS, NEAR KILMARNOCK.

Edinburgh, Feb. 5th, 1787.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

WHEN I look at the date of your kind letter, my heart reproaches me severely with ingratitude in neglecting so long to answer it. I will not trouble you with any account, by way of apology, of my hurried life and distracted attention : do me the justice to believe that my delay by no means proceeded from want of respect. I feel, and ever shall feel for you, the mingled sentiments of esteem for a friend and reverence for a father.

I thank you, Sir, with all my soul for your friendly hints, though I do not need them so much as my friends are apt to imagine. You are dazzled with newspaper accounts and distant reports ; but, in reality, I have no great temptation to be intoxicated with

the cup of prosperity. Novelty may attract the attention of mankind awhile ; to it I owe my present éclat ; but I see the time not far distant when the popular tide which has borne me to a height of which I am, perhaps, unworthy, shall recede with silent celerity and leave me a barren waste of sand, to descend at my leisure to my former station. I do not say this in the affectation of modesty ; I see the consequence is unavoidable, and am prepared for it. I had been at a good deal of pains to form a just, impartial estimate of my intellectual powers before I came here ; I have not added, since I came to Edinburgh, anything to the account ; and I trust I shall take every atom of it back to my shades, the coverts of my unnoticed, early years.

In Dr. Blacklock, whom I see very often, I have found what I would have expected in our friend, a clear head and an excellent heart.

By far the most agreeable hours I spend in Edinburgh must be placed to the account of Miss Lowrie and her piano-forte. I cannot help repeating to you and Mrs. Lowrie a compliment that Mr. Mackenzie, the celebrated "Man of Feeling," paid to Miss Lowrie the other night, at the concert. I had come in at the interlude, and sat down by him till I saw Miss Lowrie in a seat not very distant, and went up to pay my respects to her. On my return to Mr. Mackenzie he asked me who she was ; I told him 'twas the daughter of a reverend friend of mine in the west country. He returned, there was something very striking, to his idea, in her appearance. On my desiring to know what it was, he was pleased to say, "She has a great deal of the elegance of a well-bred lady about her, with all the sweet simplicity of a country girl."

My compliments to all the happy inmates of St. Margaret's.

R. B.

[The Rev. Dr. Lowrie was one of the Poet's earliest friends : the door of his manse was always open to him, a seat at his table was ever at his command, and he seems to have been fully sensible of the kindness with which he was treated. The letter, to which this of Burns was in answer, is dated 22d December, 1786 : Lowrie complains that he had not then waited on Dr. Blacklock, whose advice induced him, it is said, to go to Edinburgh : it seems, however, all but certain, that he had resolved to go there before the blind bard's epistle arrived. Of Dr. Lowrie's anxiety for his honest fame, his letter may be taken as a proof:—

“ I rejoice to hear, from all corners, of your rising fame, and I wish and expect it may tower still higher by the new publication. But, as a friend, I warn you to prepare to meet with your share of detraction and envy—a train that always accompany great men. For your comfort I am in great hopes that the number of your friends and admirers will increase, and that you have some chance of ministerial, or even royal patronage. Now, my friend, such rapid success is very uncommon, and do you think yourself in no danger of suffering by applause and a full purse ? Remember Solomon's advice, which he spoke from experience, “ stronger is he that conquers,” &c. Keep fast hold of your rural simplicity and purity, like Telemachus, by Mentor's aid in Calypso's isle, or even in that of Cyprus. I hope you have also Minerva with you. I need not tell you how much a modest diffidence and invincible temperance adorn the most shining talents, and elevate the mind, and exalt and refine the imagination even of a poet.

“ I hope you will not imagine I speak from suspicion or evil report. I assure you I speak from love and good report, and good opinion, and a strong desire to see you shine as much in the sunshine as you have done in the shade ; and in the practice as you do in the theory of virtue. This is my prayer in return for your elegant composition in verse. All here join in compliments and good wishes for your further prosperity.”—
Ed.]

No. XXXVIII.

TO DR. MOORE.

Edinburgh, 15th February, 1787.

SIR,

PARDON my seeming neglect in delaying so long to acknowledge the honor you have done me, in your kind notice of me, January 23d. Not many months ago I knew no other employment than following the plough, nor could boast any thing higher than a distant acquaintance with a country clergyman. Mere greatness never embarrasses me; I have nothing to ask from the great, and I do not fear their judgment: but genius, polished by learning, and at its proper point of elevation in the eye of the world, this of late I frequently meet with, and tremble at its approach. I scorn the affectation of seeming modesty to cover self-conceit. That I have some merit I do not deny; but I see with frequent wringings of heart, that the novelty of my character, and the honest national prejudice of my countrymen, have borne me to a height altogether untenable to my abilities.

For the honor Miss Williams has done me, please, Sir, return her in my name my most grateful thanks. I have more than once thought of paying her in kind, but have hitherto quitted the idea in hopeless despondency. I had never before heard of her; but the other day I got her poems, which for several reasons, some belonging to the head, and others the offspring of the heart, give me a great deal of pleasure. I have little pretensions to critic lore; there are, I think, two characteristic features in her poetry—the unfettered wild flight of native genius, and the querulous, sombre tenderness of “time-settled sorrow.”

I only know what pleases me often without being able to tell why.

R. B.

[The answer of Moore is characteristic of the man: the glimpse which it gives of the household in which the heroic Sir John Moore was born and bred, will be acceptable to the world.

"Clifford-street, 28th February, 1787.

"DEAR SIR :—Your letter of the 15th gave me a great deal of pleasure. It is not surprising that you improve in correctness and taste, considering where you have been for some time past. And I dare swear there is no danger of your admitting any polish which might weaken the vigor of your native powers.

"I am glad to perceive that you disdain the nauseous affectation of decrying your own merit as a poet, an affectation which is displayed with most ostentation by those who have the greatest share of self-conceit, and which only adds undeceiving falsehood to disgusting vanity. For you to deny the merit of your poems, would be arraigning the fixed opinion of the public.

"As the new edition of my 'View of Society' is not yet ready, I have sent you the former edition, which I beg you will accept as a small mark of my esteem. It is sent by sea to the care of Mr. Creech, and along with these four volumes for yourself, I have also sent my 'Medical Sketches' in one volume, for my friend Mrs. Dunlop, of Dunlop: this you will be so obliging as to transmit, or, if you chance to pass soon by Dunlop, to give to her.

"I am happy to hear that your subscription is so ample, and shall rejoice at every piece of good fortune that befalls you. For you are a very great favorite in my family; and this is a higher compliment than perhaps you are aware of. It includes almost all the professions, and of course is a proof that your writings are adapted to various tastes and situations. My youngest son who is at Winchester school, writes to me, that he is translating some stanzas of your 'Hallowe'en' into Latin verse, for the benefit of his comrades."—ED.]

No. XXXIX.

TO JOHN BALLANTINE, Esq.

Edinburgh, Feb. 24, 1787.

MY HONORED FRIEND,

I WILL soon be with you now, in guid black prent;—in a week or ten days at farthest. I am obliged,

against my own wish, to print subscribers' names; so if any of my Ayr friends have subscription bills, they must be sent into Creech directly. I am getting my phiz done by an eminent engraver, and if it can be ready in time, I will appear in my book, looking like all other *fools* to my title-page. R. B.

[The original picture from which Beugo engraved the portrait, to which the Poet alludes, was painted by the now venerable Nasmyth—the eldest of living British artists. It is of the cabinet size, and though deficient in that look of inspiration which belonged peculiarly to Burns, is regarded by all the North as a good likeness. The engraving by Beugo has a more melancholy air, and is of a swarthier hue: this change was made by the engraver, who caused the Poet to sit to him, and finished the copper from his face, in preference to working from the picture. This painting passed into the hands of Mrs. Burns, after the death of Alexander Cunningham: it is now on its way to the Poet's son, Captain William Burns, in India.—ED.]

No. XL.

TO THE EARL OF GLENCAIRN.

Edinburgh, 1787.

MY LORD,

I WANTED to purchase a profile of your lordship, which I was told was to be got in town; but I am truly sorry to see that a blundering painter has spoiled a "human face divine." The enclosed stanzas I intended to have written below a picture or profile of your lordship, could I have been so happy as to procure one with any thing of a likeness.

As I will soon return to my shades, I wanted to have something like a material object for my gratitude; I wanted to have it in my power to say to a friend, there is my noble patron, my generous benefactor. Allow me, my lord, to publish these verses.

I conjure your lordship, by the honest throe of gratitude, by the generous wish of benevolence, by all the powers and feelings which compose the magnanimous mind, do not deny me this petition. I owe much to your lordship : and, what has not in some other instances always been the case with me, the weight of the obligation is a pleasing load. I trust I have a heart as independent as your lordship's, than which I can say nothing more ; and I would not be beholden to favors that would crucify my feelings. Your dignified character in life, and manner of supporting that character, are flattering to my pride ; and I would be jealous of the purity of my grateful attachment, where I was under the patronage of one of the much favored sons of fortune.

Almost every poet has celebrated his patrons, particularly when they were names dear to fame, and illustrious in their country ; allow me, then, my lord, if you think the verses have intrinsic merit, to tell the world how much I have the honor to be,

Your lordship's highly indebted,
And ever grateful humble servant,

R. B.

[The Earl of Glencairn seems to have refused, from motives of delicacy, the request of the Poet : and the Poet, perhaps stung by the refusal, destroyed his own copy of the verses, for they have been sought for in vain.—ED.]

No. XLI.

TO THE EARL OF BUCHAN.

MY LORD :

THE honor your lordship has done me, by your notice and advice in yours of the 1st instant, I shall ever gratefully remember :—

"Praise from thy lips 'tis mine with joy to boast,
They best can give it, who deserve it most."

Your lordship touches the darling chord of my heart, when you advise me to fire my muse at Scottish story and Scottish scenes. I wish for nothing more than to make a leisurely pilgrimage through my native country; to sit and muse on those once hard-contended fields, where Caledonia, rejoicing, saw her bloody lion borne through broken ranks to victory and fame; and, catching the inspiration, to pour the deathless names in song. But, my lord, in the midst of these enthusiastic reveries, a long-visaged, dry, moral-looking phantom strides across my imagination, and pronounces these emphatic words:—

"I, Wisdom, dwell with Prudence. Friend, I do not come to open the ill-closed wounds of your follies and misfortunes, merely to give you pain: I wish through these wounds to imprint a lasting lesson on your heart. I will not mention how many of my salutary advices you have despised: I have given you line upon line and precept upon precept; and while I was chalking out to you the straight way to wealth and character, with audacious effrontery you have zigzagged across the path, contemning me to my face: you know the consequences. It is not yet three months since home was so hot for you that you were on the wing for the western shore of the Atlantic, not to make a fortune, but to hide your misfortune.

"Now that your dear-loved Scotia puts it in your power to return to the situation of your forefathers, will you follow these will-o'-wisp meteors of fancy and whim, till they bring you once more to the brink of ruin? I grant that the utmost ground you can occupy is but half a step from the veriest poverty; but still it is half a step from it. If all that I can urge be ineffectual, let her who seldom calls to you in vain, let the call of pride prevail with you. You know how

you feel at the iron gripe of ruthless oppression : you know how you bear the galling sneer of contumelious greatness. I hold you out the conveniences, the comforts of life, independence, and character, on the one hand ; I tender you civility, dependence, and wretchedness, on the other. I will not insult your understanding by bidding you make a choice."

This, my lord, is unanswerable. I must return to my humble station, and woo my rustic muse in my wonted way at the plough-tail. Still, my lord, while the drops of life warm my heart, gratitude to that dear-loved country in which I boast my birth, and gratitude to those her distinguished sons, who have honored me so much with their patronage and approbation, shall, while stealing through my humble shades, ever distend my bosom, and at times, as now, draw forth the swelling tear.

R. B.

[The Earl of Buchan was one of the most economical of patrons ; lest the object of his kindness might chance to feel too heavily the debt of obligation, he did not hesitate to allow a painter to present him with a picture, or a poet with a poem. He advised Burns to make a pilgrimage to the scenes of Scotland's battles, in the hope perhaps, that Ancram-moor would be immortalized in song, and the name of the " Commendator of Drybrugh" included in the strain.—ED.]

No. XLII.

TO MR. JAMES CANDLISH.

Edinburgh, March 21, 1787.

MY EVER DEAR OLD ACQUAINTANCE,

I WAS equally surprised and pleased at your letter, though I dare say you will think by my delaying so long to write to you that I am so drowned in the in-

toxication of good fortune as to be indifferent to old, and once dear connexions. The truth is, I was determined to write a good letter, full of argument, amplification, erudition, and, as Bayes says, *all that*.

thought of it, and thought of it, and by my soul, I could not; and, lest you should mistake the cause of my silence, I just sit down to tell you so. Don't give yourself credit, though, that the strength of your logic scares me: the truth is, I never mean to meet you on that ground at all. You have shown me one thing which was to be demonstrated: that strong pride of reasoning, with a little affectation of singularity, may mislead the best of hearts. I likewise, since you and I were first acquainted, in the pride of despising old women's stories, ventured in "the daring path Spinoso trod;" but experience of the weakness, not the strength of human powers, made me glad to grasp at revealed religion.

I am still, in the Apostle Paul's phrase, "The old man with his deeds," as when we were sporting about the "Lady thorn." I shall be four weeks here yet at least; and so I shall expect to hear from you; welcome sense, welcome nonsense.

I am with the warmest sincerity,

R. B.

[The person to whom this letter is addressed—at that time a student of physic in the University of Glasgow, was a good scholar, something of a poet, and much of a controversialist. He was, it is believed, a native of the province of Galloway—was well acquainted with the poetry of John Lowe, author of "Mary's Dream," and furnished a copy of the Galwegian bard's song of "Pompey's Ghost," at the request of Burns, for the Musical Museum. He was one of the very earliest of the Poet's companions, and one of the cleverest; nor was he unsuccessful in the world.—ED.]

No. XLIII.

TO ———

Edinburgh, March, 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

YOU may think, and too justly, that I am a selfish, ungrateful fellow, having received so many repeated instances of kindness from you, and yet never putting pen to paper to say thank you; but if you knew what a devil of a life my conscience has led me on that account, your good heart would think yourself too much avenged. By the by, there is nothing in the whole frame of man which seems to be so unaccountable as that thing called conscience. Had the troublesome yelping cur powers efficient to prevent a mischief, he might be of use; but at the beginning of the business, his feeble efforts are to the workings of passion as the infant frosts of an autumnal morning to the unclouded fervor of the rising sun; and no sooner are the tumultuous doings of the wicked deed over, than, amidst the bitter native consequences of folly, in the very vortex of our horrors, up starts conscience, and harrows us with the feelings of the damned.

I have enclosed you, by way of expiation, some verse and prose, that, if they merit a place in your truly entertaining miscellany, you are welcome to. The prose extract is literally as Mr. Sprott sent it me.

The inscription on the stone is as follows:—

“HERE LIES ROBERT FERGUSSON, POET,

“Born, September 5th, 1751—Died, 16th October, 1774.

“No sculptur’d marble here, nor pompous lay,

‘No storied urn nor animated bust;’

This simple stone directs pale Scotia’s way

To pour her sorrows o’er her poet’s dust.”

On the other side of the stone is as follows:—

“By special grant of the managers to Robert Burns, who erected this stone, this burial-place is to remain for ever sacred to the memory of Robert Fergusson.”

Session-house within the Kirk of Canongate, the twenty-second day of February, one thousand seven hundred eighty-seven years.

Sederunt of the Managers of the Kirk and Kirk Yard funds of Canongate.

Which day, the treasurer to the said funds produced a letter from Mr. Robert Burns, of date the 6th current, which was read and appointed to be engrossed in their sederunt book, and of which letter the tenor follows:—

“To the honorable baillies of Canongate, Edinburgh.—Gentlemen, I am sorry to be told that the remains of Robert Fergusson, the so justly celebrated poet, a man whose talents for ages to come will do honor to our Caledonian name, lie in your churchyard among the ignoble dead, unnoticed and unknown.

“Some memorial to direct the steps of the lovers of Scottish song, when they wish to shed a tear over the ‘narrow house’ of the bard who is no more, is surely a tribute due to Fergusson’s memory: a tribute I wish to have the honor of paying.

“I petition you then, gentlemen, to permit me to lay a simple stone over his revered ashes, to remain an unalienable property to his deathless fame. I have the honor to be, gentlemen, your very humble servant (*sic subscribitur*),

ROBERT BURNS.”

Thereafter the said managers, in consideration of the laudable and disinterested motion of Mr. Burns, and the propriety of his request, did, and hereby do, unanimously, grant power and liberty to the said Robert Burns to erect a headstone at the grave of the said Robert Fergusson, and to keep up and preserve the same to his memory in all time coming. Extracted forth of the records of the managers, by

WILLIAM SPROTT, Clerk.

[From the sinking of the ground of the neighbouring graves, the head-stone placed by Burns over Fergusson, was thrown from its balance : this was observed soon after the death of the Bard of Ayr, by the Esculapian club of Edinburgh, who re-fixed the original stone, and added some iron work, with an inscription to the memory of Burns. To have raised one solid monument of masonry to both, working Fergusson's head-stone into one side of the structure, and placing the Burns inscription on the other, would perhaps have been more judicious. —ED.]

No. XLIV.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Edinburgh, March 22nd, 1787.

MADAM,

I READ your letter with watery eyes. A little, very little while ago, I had scarce a friend but the stubborn pride of my own bosom ; now I am distinguished, patronized, befriended by you. Your friendly advices, I will not give them the cold name of criticisms, I receive with reverence. I have made some small alterations in what I before had printed. I have the advice of some very judicious friends among the literati here, but with them I sometimes find it necessary to claim the privilege of thinking for myself. The noble Earl of Glencairn, to whom I owe more than to any man, does me the honor of giving me his strictures : his hints, with respect to impropriety or delicacy, I follow implicitly.

You kindly interest yourself in my future views and prospects ; there I can give you no light. It is all

“ Dark as was Chaos ere the infant sun
Was roll'd together, or had tried his beams
Athwart the gloom profound.”

The appellation of a Scottish bard, is by far my highest pride ; to continue to deserve it is my most exalted ambition. Scottish scenes and Scottish story are the themes I could wish to sing. I have no dearer aim than to have it in my power, unplagued with the routine of business, for which heaven knows I am unfit enough, to make leisurely pilgrimages through Caledonia ; to sit on the fields of her battles ; to wander on the romantic banks of her rivers ; and to muse by the stately towers or venerable ruins, once the honored abodes of her heroes.

But these are all Utopian thoughts : I have dallied long enough with life ; 'tis time to be in earnest. I have a fond, an aged mother to care for : and some other bosom ties perhaps equally tender. Where the individual only suffers by the consequences of his own thoughtlessness, indolence, or folly, he may be excusable ; nay, shining abilities, and some of the nobler virtues, may half sanctify a heedless character ; but where God and nature have entrusted the welfare of others to his care ; where the trust is sacred, and the ties are dear, that man must be far gone in selfishness, or strangely lost to reflection, whom these connections will not rouse to exertion.

I guess that I shall clear between two and three hundred pounds by my authorship ; with that sum I intend, so far as I may be said to have any intention, to return to my old acquaintance, the plough, and, if I can meet with a lease by which I can live, to commence farmer. I do not intend to give up poetry ; being bred to labor, secures me independence, and the muses are my chief, sometimes have been my only enjoyment. If my practice second my resolution, I shall have principally at heart the serious business of life ; but while following my plough, or building up my shocks, I shall cast a leisure glance to that dear, that only feature of my character, which gave me the notice of my country and the patronage of a Wallace.

Thus, honored Madam, I have given you the bard,
his situation, and his views, native as they are in his
own bosom. R. B.

[It has not hitherto been stated accurately how much the Poet made by the subscription copy of his poems : the clear profit has indeed been calculated at seven hundred pounds : but such calculations can be at the best but lucky guesses, in the absence of a correct subscription-paper. Some put down their names for ten copies and took but one, while others subscribed for one and paid a guinea.—ED.]

No. XLV.

TO THE SAME.

Edinburgh, 15th April, 1787.

MADAM,

THERE is an affectation of gratitude which I dislike. The periods of Johnson and the pauses of Sterne may hide a selfish heart. For my part, Madam, I trust I have too much pride for servility, and too little prudence for selfishness. I have this moment broken open your letter, but

“ Rude am I in speech,
And therefore little can I grace my cause
In speaking for myself—”

so I shall not trouble you with any fine speeches and hunted figures. I shall just lay my hand on my heart and say, I hope I shall ever have the truest, the warmest, sense of your goodness.

I come abroad, in print, for certain on Wednesday. Your orders I shall punctually attend to ; only by the way, I must tell you that I was paid before for Dr. Moore's and Miss Williams' copies, through the medium of Commissioner Cochrane in this place, but that we can settle when I have the honor of waiting on you.

Dr. Smith* was just gone to London the morning before I received your letter to him.

R. B.

No. XLVI.

TO DR. MOORE.

Edinburgh, 23d April, 1787.

I RECEIVED the books, and sent the one you mentioned to Mrs. Dunlop. I am ill skilled in beating the coverts of imagination for metaphors of gratitude. I thank you, Sir, for the honor you have done me ; and to my latest hour will warmly remember it. To be highly pleased with your book is what I have in common with the world ; but to regard these volumes as a mark of the author's friendly esteem, is a still more supreme gratification.

I leave Edinburgh in the course of ten days or a fortnight, and after a few pilgrimages over some of the classic ground of Caledonia, Cowden Knowes, Banks of Yarrow, Tweed, &c., I shall return to my rural shades, in all likelihood never more to quit them. I have formed many intimacies and friendships here, but I am afraid they are all of too tender a construction to bear carriage a hundred and fifty miles. To the rich, the great, the fashionable, the polite, I have no equivalent to offer ; and I am afraid my meteor appearance will by no means entitle me to a settled correspondence with any of you, who are the permanent lights of genius and literature.

My most respectful compliments to Miss Williams. If once this tangent flight of mine were over, and I were returned to my wonted leisurely motion in my old circle, I may probably endeavour to return her poetic compliment in kind.

R. B.

* Adam Smith.

[The memoranda made by Burns during his pilgrimage to the classic ground of Caledonia, will appear in its proper place. He seems not, however, to have noted the "classic grounds" so minutely as he studied the living characters whom he chanced to meet in his journey. He looked indeed at "Cowden Knowes" and the "Bush aboon Traquair," and spent an hour beside the Rhymer's Tower, but he was not aware when he stood on the romantic scene of Young Tamlane—indeed there was little of the legendary bard about him.—ED.]

No. XLVII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Edinburgh, 30th April, 1787.

———YOUR criticisms, Madam, I understand very well, and could have wished to have pleased you better. You are right in your guess that I am not very amenable to counsel. Poets, much my superiors, have so flattered those who possessed the adventitious qualities of wealth and power, that I am determined to flatter no created being, either in prose or verse.

I set as little by princes, lords, clergy, critics, &c. as all these respective gentry do by my bardship. I know what I may expect from the world, by and by—illiberal abuse, and perhaps contemptuous neglect.

I am happy, Madam, that some of my own favorite pieces are distinguished by your particular approbation. For my "Dream," which has unfortunately incurred your loyal displeasure, I hope in four weeks, or less, to have the honor of appearing, at Dunlop, in its defence in person.

R. B.

No. XLVIII.

TO THE REV. DR. HUGH BLAIR.

Lawn-market, Edinburgh, 3rd May, 1787.

REVEREND AND MUCH-RESPECTED SIR,

I LEAVE Edinburgh to-morrow morning, but could not go without troubling you with half a line, sincerely to thank you for the kindness, patronage, and friendship you have shown me. I often felt the embarrassment of my singular situation ; drawn forth from the veriest shades of life to the glare of remark ; and honored by the notice of those illustrious names of my country whose works, while they are applauded to the end of time, will ever instruct and mend the heart. However the meteorlike novelty of my appearance in the world might attract notice, and honor me with the acquaintance of the permanent lights of genius and literature, those who are truly benefactors of the immortal nature of man, I knew very well that my utmost merit was far unequal to the task of preserving that character when once the novelty was over ; I have made up my mind that abuse, or almost even neglect, will not surprise me in my quarters.

I have sent you a proof impression of Beugo's work* for me, done on Indian paper, as a trifling but sincere testimony with what heart-warm gratitude I am, &c.

R. B.

[The answer of Blair to this letter contains a full refutation of all those who asserted that the Poet's life in Edinburgh, was wild and irregular :—

“ Argyle-square, Edinburgh, 4th May, 1787.

“ DEAR SIR :—I was favored this forenoon with your very obliging letter, together with an impression of your portrait, for which I return you my best thanks. The success you have met

* The portrait of the Poet after Nasmyth.

with I do not think was beyond your merits ; and if I have had any small hand in contributing to it, it gives me great pleasure. I know no way in which literary persons who are advanced in years can do more service to the world, than in forwarding the efforts of rising genius, or bringing forth unknown merit from obscurity. I was the first person who brought out to the notice of the world the poems of Ossian ; first, by the ‘Fragments of ancient Poetry,’ which I published, and afterwards by my setting on foot the undertaking for collecting and publishing the ‘Works of Ossian ;’ and I have always considered this as a meritorious action of my life.

“Your situation, as you say, was indeed very singular : and in being brought out, all at once, from the shades of deepest privacy to so great a share of public notice and observation, you had to stand a severe trial. I am happy that you have stood it so well ; and, as far as I have known or heard, though in the midst of many temptations, without reproach to your character and behaviour.

“You are now I presume to retire to a more private walk of life ; and I trust will conduct yourself there with industry, prudence, and honor. You have laid the foundation for just public esteem. In the midst of those employments, which your situation will render proper, you will not I hope neglect to promote that esteem, by cultivating your genius, and attending to such productions of it, as may raise your character still higher. At the same time be not in too great haste to come forward. Take time and leisure to improve and mature your talents. For on any second production you give the world, your fate, as a poet, will very much depend. There is no doubt a gloss of novelty, which time wears off. As you very properly hint yourself, you are not to be surprised, if in your rural retreat you do not find yourself surrounded with that glare of notice and applause which here shone upon you. No man can be a good poet without being somewhat of a philosopher. He must lay his account, that any one, who exposes himself to public observation, will occasionally meet with the attacks of illiberal censure, which it is always best to overlook and despise. He will be inclined sometimes to court retreat, and to disappear from public view. He will not affect to shine always ; that he may at proper seasons come forth with more advantage and energy. He will not think himself neglected if he be not always praised. I have taken the liberty you see of an old man to give advice and make reflections, which your own good sense will I dare say render unnecessary.

When you return, if you come this way, I will be happy to see you, and to know concerning your future plans of life. You will find me by the 22d of this month, not in my house in Argyle-square, but at a country-house at Rastalrig, about a mile east from Eninburgh, near the Musselburgh-road. Wishing you all success and prosperity, I am, with real regard and esteem,

“ Dear Sir,

“ Yours sincerely,

“ HUGH BLAIR.”—ED.]

No. XLIX.

TO WILLIAM CREECH, Esq,

EDINBURGH.

Selkirk, 13th May, 1787.

MY HONORED FRIEND,

THE enclosed I have just wrote, nearly extempore, in a solitary inn in Selkirk, after a miserable wet day's riding. I have been over most of East Lothian, Berwick, Roxburgh, and Selkirk-shires; and next week I begin a tour through the north of England. Yesterday I dined with Lady Harriet, sister to my noble patron,* *Quem Deus conservet!* I would write till I would tire you as much with dull prose, as I dare say by this time you are with wretched verse, but I am jaded to death; so, with a grateful farewell,

I have the honor to be,

Good Sir, yours sincerely,

R. B.

Auld chuckie Reekie's† sair distrest,
Down droops her ance well burnish'd crest,
Nae joy her bonnie buskit nest

Can yield ava;
Her darling bird that she loe's best,
Willie's awa!‡

* James, Earl of Glencairn.

† Edinburgh.

‡ See Vol. II., p. 63.

No. I.

TO MR. W. NICOL,

MASTER OF THE HIGH SCHOOL, EDINBURGH.

Carlisle, June 1, 1787.

KIND, HONEST-HEARTED WILLIE,

I'm sitten down here, after seven and forty miles ridin', e'en as forjesket and forniaw'd as a forfoughten cock, to gie you some notion o' my land lowperlike stravaguin sin the sorrowfu' how that I sheuk hands and parted wi' auld Reekie.

My auld, ga'd gleyde o' a meere has huchyall'd up hill and down brae, in Scotland and England, as teugh and birnie as a vera devil wi' me.* It's true, she's as poor's a sang-maker and as hard's a kirk, and tipper-taipers when she taks the gate, first like a lady's gentlewoman in a minuwae, or a hen on a het girdle; but she's a yauld, poutherie Girran for a' that, and has a stomach like Willie Stalker's meere that wad hae disgeested tumblerwheels, for she'll whip me aff her five stimparts o' the best aits at a down-sittin and ne'er fash her thumb. When ance her ringbanes and spavies, her crucks, and cramps, are fairly soupl'd, she beets to, beets to, and ay the hindmost hour the tightest. I could wager her price to a thretty pennies, that for two or three weeks ridin at fifty mile a day, the deil-sticket a five gallopers acqueesh Clyde and Whithorn could cast saut on her tail.

I hae dander'd owre a' the kintra frae Dumbar to Selcraig, and hae forgather'd wi' mony a guid fallow, and monie a weelfar'd hizzie. I met wi' twa dink quines in particlar, ane o' them a sonsie, fine, fodgel lass, baith braw and bonnie; the tither was a clean-shankit, straught, tight, weelfar'd winch, as blythe's a lintwhite on a flowerie thorn, and as sweet and modest's a new blawn plumrose in a hazle shaw.

* This mare was the Poet's favorite, Jenny Geddes.

They were baith bred to mainers by the beuk, and onie ane o' them had as muckle smeddum and rumblgumtion as the half o' some presbytries that you and I baith ken. They play'd me sik a deevil o' a shavie that I daur say if my harigals were turn'd out, ye wad see twa nicks i' the heart o' me like the mark o' a kail-whittle in a castock.

I was gaun to write you a lang pystle, but Gude forgie me, I gat mysel sae noutouriously bitchify'd the day after kail-time, that I can hardly stoiter but and ben.

My best respecks to the guidwife and a' our common friens, especiall Mr. and Mrs. Cruikshank, and the honest guidman o' Jocks lodge.

I'll be in Dumfries the morn gif the beast be to the fore, and the branks bide hale.

Gude be wi' you, Willie! Amen!

R. B.

[This letter cannot be otherwise than obscure to many a reader; nor can we hope, by a mere explanation of the words individually, to let English light in upon northern darkness. The gentleman to whom it was addressed understood it well: he was of humble parentage, forced his way to distinction by his talents and his learning, and, having achieved eminence, sat quiet for a time, and seemed to be satisfied with himself. His love for pleasant company, and lively sallies of humor or of wit, led him to indulge in the pleasures of the table, and carried him to an early grave.

Jenny Geddes, the old and faithful servant of the Poet, was named by him, says Cromek, after the old woman who, in her zeal against religious innovation, threw a stool at the Dean of Edinburgh's head, when he attempted, in 1637, to introduce the Scottish Liturgy.—“On Sunday, the twenty-third of July, the Dean of Edinburgh prepared to officiate in St. Giles's. The congregation continued quiet till the service began, when an old woman, impelled by sudden indignation, started up, and exclaiming aloud, ‘Villain! dost thou say the mass at my lug?’ threw the stool on which she had been sitting at the Dean's head. A wild uproar commenced that instant. The service was in-

terruted. The woman invaded the desk with execrations and outcries, and the Dean disengaged himself from his surplice to escape from their hands."—ED.]

No. LI.

TO THE SAME.

Mauchline, June 18, 1787.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I AM now arrived safe in my native country, after a very agreeable jaunt, and have the pleasure to find all my friends well. I breakfasted with your gray-headed, reverend friend, Mr. Smith; and was highly pleased both with the cordial welcome he gave me, and his most excellent appearance and sterling good sense.

I have been with Mr. Miller at Dalswinton, and am to meet him again in August. From my view of the lands, and his reception of my bardship, my hopes in that business are rather mended; but still they are but slender.

I am quite charmed with Dumfries folks—Mr. Burnside, the clergyman, in particular, is a whom I shall ever gratefully remember; and his wife, Gude forgie me! I had almost broke the tenth commandment on her account. Simplicity, elegance, good sense, sweetness of disposition, good humor, kind hospitality, are the constituents of her manner and heart: in short—but if I say one word more about her, I shall be directly in love with her.

I never, my friend, thought mankind very capable of anything generous; but the stateliness of the patricians in Edinburgh, and the servility of my plebeian brethren (who perhaps formerly eyed me askance) since I returned home, have nearly put me out of conceit altogether with my species. I have bought a

pocket Milton, which I carry perpetually about with me, in order to study the sentiments—the dauntless magnanimity, the intrepid, unyielding independence, the desperate daring, and noble defiance of hardship, in that great personage, SATAN. 'Tis true, I have just now a little cash; but I am afraid the star that hitherto has shed its malignant, purpose-blasting rays full in my zenith; that noxious planet so baneful in its influences to the rhyming tribe, I much dread it is not yet beneath my horizon.—Misfortune dodges the path of human life; the poetic mind finds itself miserably deranged in, and unfit for the walks of business; add to all, that thoughtless follies and hare-brained whims, like so many *ignes fatui*, eternally diverging from the right line of sober discretion, sparkle with step-bewitching blaze in the idly-gazing eyes of the poor heedless Bard, till, pop, “he falls like Lucifer, never to hope again.” God grant this may be an unreal picture with respect to me! but should it not, I have very little dependence on mankind. I will close my letter with this tribute my heart bids me pay you—the many ties of acquaintance and friendship which I have, or think I have in life, I have felt along the lines, and, damn them, they are almost all of them of such frail contexture, that I am sure they would not stand the breath of the least adverse breeze of fortune; but from you, my ever dear Sir, I look with confidence for the Apostolic love that shall wait on me “through good report and bad report”—the love which Solomon emphatically says “is strong as death.” My compliments to Mrs. Nicol, and all the circle of our common friends.

P. S. I shall be in Edinburgh about the latter end of July.

R. B.

No. LIII.

TO MR. JAMES CANDLISH.

Edinburgh, 1787.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

IF once I were gone from this scene of hurry and dissipation, I promise myself the pleasure of that correspondence being renewed which has been so long broken. At present I have time for nothing. Dissipation and business engross every moment. I am engaged in assisting an honest Scotch enthusiast,* a friend of mine, who is an engraver and has taken it into his head to publish a collection of all our songs set to music, of which the words and music are done by Scotsmen. This, you will easily guess, is an undertaking exactly to my taste. I have collected, begged, borrowed, and stolen, all the songs I could meet with. Pompey's Ghost, words and music, I beg from you immediately, to go into his second number: the first is already published. I shall show you the first number when I see you in Glasgow, which will be in a fortnight or less. Do be so kind as to send me the song in a day or two: you cannot imagine how much it will oblige me.

Direct to me at Mr. W. Cruickshank's, St. James's Square, New Town, Edinburgh.

R. B.

[The answer to the Poet's letter lies before me: I give it entire: it bears testimony to the taste and talents of one of Burns' early companions.

"Your kind letter came to hand, and I would have answered it sooner, had I not delayed, in expectation of finding some person who could enable me to comply with your request. Being myself unskilled in music as a science, I made an attempt to get the song you mentioned, set by some other hand; but as I could

* Johnson, the publisher and proprietor of the Musical Museum.

not accomplish this, I must send you the words without the music. Some of Edina's fair nymphs may perhaps be able to do you a piece of service which I would have done with the greatest pleasure had it been in my power. It is with the greatest sincerity I applaud your attempt to give the world a more correct and more elegant collection of Scotch songs than has hitherto appeared. They have been long and much admired, and yet perhaps no poetical compositions ever met with approbation more disproportioned to their merit. Many, from an affectation perhaps of a more than usual knowledge of ancient literature, extol, with the most extravagant praises, the pastoral productions of the Greek and Roman Poets; and attempt to persuade us, that in them alone is to be found that natural simplicity, and that tenderness of sentiment, which constitute the true excellence of that species of writing. For my own part, though I cannot altogether divest myself of partiality to the ancients, whose merit will cease only to be admired with the universal wreck of men and letters, yet I am persuaded that in many of the songs of our own nation, there are beauties which it would be vain to look for in the most admired poetical compositions of antiquity. They are the offspring of nature; they are expressed in the language of simplicity; and the love songs, breathing sentiments that are inspired by the most tender and exquisite feelings, are in unison with the human heart. There is none in whose veins the smallest drop of Scots blood circulates, but must feel the most heartfelt pleasure when he reflects that those songs, which do such honor to both the genius and to the feelings of his countrymen; which, in simplicity of language, and in the sensibility that pervades them, have never been equalled by those of any nation; and which have been so much admired by foreigners, will continue to be sung with delight by both sexes, while Scots men and the Scots language remain.—If the collection is to be published by subscription, put down my name for a copy. My time this winter is very much employed—no less than ten hours a day. Expecting to see you soon, I am yours most sincerely.

“JAMES CANDLISH.”

No. LIH.

TO ROBERT AINSLIE, Esq.

Arrachar, 28th June, 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

I WRITE this on my tour through a country where savage streams tumble over savage mountains, thinly overspread with savage flocks, which staringly support as savage inhabitants. My last stage was Inverary—to-morrow night's stage Dumbarton. I ought sooner to have answered your kind letter, but you know I am a man of many sins.

R. B.

[The gentleman to whom this brief and pithy note is addressed has been already mentioned in the life of the Poet. He was then young and enthusiastic : joyous of nature, and had none of the stiff, starched stateliness of manners, which characterized many of his day who desired to be thought polite. He is of an old border family, with a taste for literature, and made himself acceptable to Burns as much by his remarks on Scottish poetry as by his agreeable gaiety of heart. More of him will be seen in the course of this correspondence, and still more when the tour which he made in the Poet's company along the border is laid before the reader. He has the merit of being one of the unchanged and steadfast friends of Burns : he is now advanced in years : nor has he been unsuccessful in life, or in his pursuits in literature. He is well known as the author of the "Reasons for the hope that is in us," in which Scripture unites with reason, and reason with rational argument—it has been happily described by an eminent prelate as a "valuable compendium of evidence in behalf of revealed religion : perspicuous, candid, and above all, stamped with the characteristics which a belief in that religion alone can give."

Ainslie has, on more occasions than one, borne testimony to the high qualities of the mind of Burns.—"He had his memory stored," he says, "with the finest poetical passages, which he was in the habit of quoting most aptly in his correspondence with his friends : and he delighted also in repeating them when in company with those friends who enjoyed them. Living, as I did, in habits of close intimacy with him during his residence in

Edinburgh, when he published the second edition of his poems, often have I heard him recite these fine verses, which seemed to have made much impression on him :—

‘ ’Tis *this*, my friend, that streaks our morning bright ;
 ’Tis *this* that gilds the horror of our night,—
 When wealth forsakes us, and when friends are few ;
 When friends are faithless, and when foes pursue.

‘ ’Tis *this* that wards the blow, or stills the smart,
 Disarms affliction, or repels the dart ;
 Within the breast bids purest rapture rise,
 Bids smiling conscience spread her cloudless skies.’

Poor Burns ! Those who were best acquainted with him knew that he viewed and considered these noble and interesting subjects as he ought. The lapse of fleeting years is fast dissipating the remains of unkind feeling with which some latterly regarded him : and while his country justly appreciates him, his fame will descend to future times, worthy of the author of ‘ The Cotter’s Saturday Night.’ ”—ED.]

No. LIV.

TO WILLIAM NICOL, Esq.

Auchtertyre, Monday, June, 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

I FIND myself very comfortable here, neither oppressed by ceremony, nor mortified by neglect. Lady Augusta is a most engaging woman, and very happy in her family, which makes one’s outgoings and incomings very agreeable. I called at Mr. Ramsay’s of Auchtertyre as I came up the country, and am so delighted with him that I shall certainly accept of his invitation to spend a day or two with him as I return. I leave this place on Wednesday or Thursday.

Make my kind compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Cruikshank and Mrs. Nicol, if she is returned.

I am ever, dear Sir,

Your deeply indebted,—R. B.

[Burns was now on his first tour in the Highlands : he set out in no pleasant mood, for he scattered sharp epigrams and bitter lampoons on all and sundry as he travelled along. The verses on the window of the inn at Stirling—on Carron Foundry, and on Inverary, belong to this jaunt : nor had the witchery of beauty or the presence of learning any influence over his muse. The following complimentary verse is said to have been composed about this period—it is an epitaph on Nicol himself:—

“ Ye maggots feed on Willie’s brain,
For few sic feasts you’ve gotten,
And fix your fangs on Willie’s heart,
For fient a bit ot’s rotten.”—ED.]

No. LV.

TO WILLIAM CRUIKSHANK,

ST. JAMES’S SQUARE, EDINBURGH.

Auchtertyre, Monday morning.

I HAVE nothing, my dear Sir, to write to you, but that I feel myself exceedingly comfortably situated in this good family : just notice enough to make me easy but not to embarrass me. I was storm-staid two days at the foot of the Ochill-hills, with Mr. Tait of Herveystone and Mr. Johnston of Alva, but was so well pleased that I shall certainly spend a day on the banks of the Devon as I return. I leave this place I suppose on Wednesday, and shall devote a day to Mr. Ramsay at Auchtertyre, near Stirling ; a man to whose worth I cannot do justice. My respectful kind compliments to Mrs. Cruikshank, and my dear little Jeanie, and if you see Mr. Masterton, please remember me to him.

I am ever,

My dear Sir, &c.—R. B.

[William Cruikshank, one of the masters of the high school of Edinburgh, was kind and obliging, and as his station required, a good scholar. At his house Burns passed many pleasant evenings. The "dear little Jeanie" of this letter was the "Rose-bud" of one of his sweetest poems: she was not only beautiful, but sang with feeling, and played on various musical instruments with such grace as called forth, on several occasions, the commendations of the Bard. The letter is chiefly valuable as a record of his friendships and of his line of march into the Highlands.—ED.]

No. LVI.

TO MR. JAMES SMITH,

LINLITHGOW.

June, 30, 1787.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

ON our return, at a Highland gentleman's hospitable mansion, we fell in with a merry party, and danced till the ladies left us, at three in the morning. Our dancing was none of the French or English insipid formal movements; the ladies sung Scotch songs like angels, at intervals; then we flew at Bab at the Bowster, Tullochgorum, Loch Eroch Side,* &c. like midges sporting in the mottie sun, or craws prognosticating a storm in a hairst day.—When the dear lasses left us, we ranged round the bowl till the good-fellow hour of six; except a few minutes that we went out to pay our devotions to the glorious lamp of day peering over the towering top of Benlomond. We all kneeled; our worthy landlord's son held the bowl; each man a full glass in his hand; and I, as priest, repeated some rhyming nonsense, like Thomas-a-Rhymer's prophecies I suppose.—After a small refreshment of the gifts of Somnus, we proceeded to spend

* Scotch tunes.

the day on Lochlomond, and reached Dumbarton in the evening. We dined at another good fellow's house, and, consequently, pushed the bottle; when we went out to mount our horses, we found ourselves "No vera fou but gaylie yet." My two friends and I rode soberly down the Loch side till by came a Highlandman at the gallop, on a tolerably good horse, but which had never known the ornaments of iron or leather. We scorned to be out-galloped by a Highlandman, so off we started, whip and spur. My companions, though seemingly gaily mounted, fell sadly astern; but my old mare, Jenny Geddes, one of the Rosinante family, she strained past the Highlandman in spite of all his efforts with the hair halter: just as I was passing him, Donald wheeled his horse, as if to cross before me to mar my progress, when down came his horse, and threw his rider's breechless a—e in a clipt hedge; and down came Jenny Geddes over all, and my bardship between her and the Highlandman's horse. Jenny Geddes trode over me with such cautious reverence, that matters were not so bad as might well have been expected; so I came off with a few cuts and bruises, and a thorough resolution to be a pattern of sobriety for the future.

I have yet fixed on nothing with respect to the serious business of life. I am, just as usual, a rhyming, mason-making, raking, aimless, idle fellow. However, I shall somewhere have a farm soon. I was going to say a wife too; but that must never be my blessed lot. I am but a younger son of the house of Parnassus, and like other younger sons of great families, I may intrigue, if I choose to run all risks, but must not marry.

I am afraid I have almost ruined one source, the principal one indeed, of my former happiness; that eternal propensity I always had to fall in love. My heart no more glows with feverish rapture. I have

no paradisiacal evening interviews, stolen from the restless cares and prying inhabitants of this weary world. I have only * * * *. This last is one of your distant acquaintances, has a fine figure, and elegant manners: and in the train of some great folks whom you know, has seen the politest quarters in Europe. I do like her a good deal; but what piques me is her conduct at the commencement of our acquaintance. I frequently visited her when I was in ———, and after passing regularly the intermediate degrees between the distant formal bow and the familiar grasp round the waist, I ventured, in my careless way, to talk of friendship in rather ambiguous terms; and after her return to ———, I wrote to her in the same style. Miss, construing my words farther I suppose than even I intended, flew off in a tangent of female dignity and reserve, like a mounting lark in an April morning; and wrote me an answer which measured me out very completely what an immense way I had to travel before I could reach the climate of her favor. But I am an old hawk at the sport, and wrote her such a cool, deliberate, prudent reply, as brought my bird from her aërial towerings, pop, down at my foot like Corporal Trim's hat.

As for the rest of my acts, and my wars, and all my wise sayings, and why my mare was called Jenny Geddes, they shall be recorded in a few weeks hence at Linlithgow, in the chronicles of your memory, by
R. B.

[The young lady to whom the Poet alludes in this letter, was very beautiful and very proud—it is said she gave his bardship such a specimen of both her pride and temper as

“Made poor Robin stand abiegh.”—Ed.]

No. LVII.

TO MR. JOHN RICHMOND.

Mossiel, 7th July, 1787.

MY DEAR RICHMOND,

I AM all impatience to hear of your fate since the old confounder of right and wrong has turned you out of place, by his journey to answer his indictment at the bar of the other world. He will find the practice of the court so different from the practice in which he has for so many years been thoroughly hackneyed, that his friends, if he had any connections truly of that kind, which I rather doubt, may well tremble for his sake. His chicane, his left-handed wisdom, which stood so firmly by him, to such good purpose, here, like other accomplices in robbery and plunder, will, now the piratical buisness is blown, in all probability turn king's evidences, and then the devil's bagpiper will touch him off "Bundle and go!"

If he has left you any legacy, I beg your pardon for all this; if not, I know you will swear to every word I said about him.

I have lately been rambling over by Dumbarton and Inverary, and running a drunken race on the side, of Lochlomond with a wild Highlandman; his horse which had never known the ornaments of iron or leather, zigzagged across before my old spavin'd hunter, whose name is Jenny Geddes, and down came the Highlandman, horse and all, and down came Jenny and my bardship; so I have got such a skinful of bruises and wounds, that I shall be at least four weeks before I dare venture on my journey to Edinburgh.

Not one new thing under the sun has happened in Mauchline since you left it. I hope this will find you as comfortably situated as formerly, or, if heaven

pleases more so ; but at all events, I trust you will let me know of course how matters stand with you, well or ill. 'Tis but poor consolation to tell the world when matters go wrong ; but you know very well your connection and mine stands on a different footing.

I am ever, my dear friend, yours,

R. B.

[The time has not yet arrived for a full explanation of this bitter letter which the kindness of Mr. Richmond has enabled me for the first time to publish.—ED.]

No. LVIII.

TO DR. MOORE.

Mauchline, 2nd August, 1787.

SIR,

FOR some months past I have been rambling over the country, but I am now confined with some lingering complaints, originating, as I take it, in the stomach. To divert my spirits a little in this miserable fog of ennui, I have taken a whim to give you a history of myself. My name has made some little noise in this country ; you have done me the honor to interest yourself very warmly in my behalf ; and I think a faithful account of what character of a man I am, and how I came by that character, may perhaps amuse you in an idle moment. I will give you an honest narrative, though I know it will be often at my own expense ; for I assure you, Sir, I have, like Solomon, whose character, excepting in the trifling affair of wisdom, I sometimes think I resemble,—I have, I say, like him turned my eyes to behold madness and folly, and like him, too, frequently shaken hands with their intoxicating friendship.—After you have perused these pages, should you think them trifling and impertinent, I only

beg leave to tell you, that the poor author wrote them under some twitching qualms of conscience, arising from a suspicion that he was doing what he ought not to do; a predicament he has more than once been in before.

I have not the most distant pretensions to assume that character which the pye-coated guardians of escutcheons call a gentleman. When at Edinburgh last winter, I got acquainted in the herald's office; and, looking through that granary of honors, I there found almost every name in the kingdom; but for me,

“ My ancient but ignoble blood
Has crept thro' scoundrels ever since the flood.”

Gules, purpure, argent, &c. quite disowned me.

My father was of the north of Scotland, the son of a farmer, and was thrown by early misfortunes on the world at large; where, after many years' wanderings and sojournings, he picked up a pretty large quantity of observation and experience, to which I am indebted for most of my little pretensions to wisdom.—I have met with few who understood men, their manners, and their ways, equal to him; but stubborn, ungainly integrity, and headlong, ungovernable irascibility, are disqualifying circumstances; consequently, I was born a very poor man's son. For the first six or seven years of my life, my father was gardener to a worthy gentleman of small estate in the neighbourhood of Ayr. Had he continued in that station, I must have marched off to be one of the little underlings about a farmhouse; but it was his dearest wish and prayer to have it in his power to keep his children under his own eye, till they could discern between good and evil; so with the assistance of his generous master, my father ventured on a small farm on his estate. At those years, I was by no means a favorite with any body. I was a good deal noted for a retentive memory, a stubborn sturdy something in my disposition, and an enthusiastic idiot* piety

* Idiot for idiotic..

I say idiot piety, because I was then but a child. Though it cost the schoolmaster some thrashings, I made an excellent English scholar; and by the time I was ten or eleven years of age, I was a critic in substantives, verbs, and particles. In my infant and boyish days, too, I owed much to an old woman who resided in the family, remarkable for her ignorance, credulity, and superstition. She had, I suppose, the largest collection in the country of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elf-candles, dead-lights, wraiths, apparitions, cantraips, giants, enchanted towers, dragons, and other trumpery. This cultivated the latent seeds of poetry; but had so strong an effect on my imagination, that to this hour, in my nocturnal rambles, I sometimes keep a sharp look out in suspicious places; and though nobody can be more skeptical than I am in such matters, yet it often takes an effort of philosophy to shake off these idle terrors. The earliest composition that I recollect taking pleasure in, was The Vision of Mirza, and a hymn of Addison's beginning, "How are thy servants blest, O Lord!" I particularly remember one half-stanza which was music to my boyish ear—

"For though on dreadful whirls we hung
High on the broken wave—"

I met with these pieces in Mason's English Collection, one of my school-books. The first two books I ever read in private, and which gave me more pleasure than any two books I ever read since, were The Life of Hannibal, and The History of Sir William Wallace. Hannibal gave my young ideas such a turn, that I used to strut in raptures up and down after the recruiting drum and bag-pipe, and wish myself tall enough to be a soldier; while the story of Wallace poured a Scottish prejudice into my veins, which will boil along there till the flood-gates of life shut in eternal rest.

Polemical divinity about this time was putting the country half mad, and I, ambitious of shining in conversation parties on Sundays, between sermons, at funerals, &c., used a few years afterwards to puzzle Calvinism with so much heat and indiscretion, that I raised a hue and cry of heresy against me, which has not ceased to this hour.

My vicinity to Ayr was of some advantage to me. My social disposition, when not checked by some modifications of spirited pride, was like our catechism definition of infinitude, without bounds or limits. I formed several connexions with other young men who possessed superior advantages; the youngling actors who were busy in the rehearsal of parts, in which they were shortly to appear on the stage of life, where, alas! I was destined to drudge behind the scenes. It is not commonly at this green age, that our young gentry have a just sense of the immense distance between them and their ragged play-fellows. It takes a few dashes into the world, to give the young great man that proper, decent, unnoticing disregard for the poor, insignificant, stupid devils, the mechanics, and peasantry around him, who were, perhaps, born in the same village. My young superiors never insulted the clouterly appearance of my plough-boy carcase, the two extremes of which were often exposed to all the inclemencies of all the seasons. They would give me stray volumes of books; among them, even then I could pick up some observations, and one, whose heart, I am sure, not even the "Munny Begum" scenes have tainted, helped me to a little French. Parting with these my young friends and benefactors as they occasionally went off for the East or West Indies was often to me a sore affliction; but I was soon called to more serious evils. My father's generous master died; the farm proved a ruinous bargain; and to clench the misfortune, we fell into the hands of

a factor, who sat for the picture I have drawn of one in my tale of "Twa Dogs." My father was advanced in life when he married; I was the eldest of seven children, and he, worn out by early hardships, was unfit for labor. My father's spirit was soon irritated, but not easily broken. There was a freedom in his lease in two years more, and to weather these two years, we retrenched our expenses. We lived very poorly: I was a dexterous ploughman for my age; and the next eldest to me was a brother (Gilbert), who could drive the plough very well, and help me to thrash the corn. A novel-writer might, perhaps, have viewed these scenes with some satisfaction, but so did not I; my indignation yet boils at the recollection of the scoundrel factor's insolent threatening letters, which used to set us all in tears.

This kind of life—the cheerless gloom of a hermit, with the unceasing moil of a galley-slave, brought me to my sixteenth year; a little before which period I first committed the sin of rhyme. You know our country custom of coupling a man and woman together as partners in the labors of harvest. In my fifteenth autumn, my partner was a bewitching creature, a year younger than myself. My scarcity of English denies me the power of doing her justice in that language, but you know the Scottish idiom: she was a "bonnie, sweet, sonsie lass." In short, she, altogether unwittingly to herself, initiated me in that delicious passion, which, in spite of acid disappointment, gin-horse prudence, and book-worm philosophy, I hold to be the first of human joys, our dearest blessing here below! How she caught the contagion I cannot tell; you medical people talk much of infection from breathing the same air, the touch, &c.; but I never expressly said I loved her.—Indeed, I did not know myself why I liked so much to loiter behind with her, when returning in the evening from our labors; why the tones of

her voice made my heart-strings thrill like an *Æolian* harp ; and particularly why my pulse beat such a furious ratan, when I looked and fingered over her little hand to pick out the cruel nettle-stings and thistles. Among her other love-inspiring qualities, she sung sweetly ; and it was her favorite reel to which I attempted giving an embodied vehicle in rhyme. I was not so presumptuous as to imagine that I could make verses like printed ones, composed by men who had Greek and Latin ; but my girl sung a song which was said to be composed by a small country laird's son, on one of his father's maids, with whom he was in love ; and I saw no reason why I might not rhyme as well as he, for, excepting that he could smear sheep, and cast peats, his father living in the moorlands, he had no more scholar-craft than myself.

Thus with me began love and poetry ; which at times have been my only, and till within the last twelve months, have been my highest enjoyment. My father struggled on till he reached the freedom in his lease, when he entered on a larger farm, about ten miles farther in the country. The nature of the bargain he made was such as to throw a little ready money into his hands at the commencement of his lease, otherwise the affair would have been impracticable. For four years we lived comfortably here, but a difference commencing between him and his landlord as to terms, after three years' tossing and whirling in the vortex of litigation, my father was just saved from the horrors of a jail, by a consumption, which, after two years' promises, kindly stepped in, and carried him away, to where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest !

It is during the time that we lived on this farm, that my little story is most eventful. I was, at the beginning of this period, perhaps, the most ungainly awkward boy in the parish—no *solitaire* was less ac-

quainted with the ways of the world. What I knew of ancient story was gathered from Salmon's and Guthrie's Geographical Grammars; and the ideas I had formed of modern manners, of literature, and criticism, I got from the Spectator. These, with Pope's Works, some Plays of Shakspeare, Tull and Dickson on Agriculture, The Pantheon, Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding, Stackhouse's History of the Bible, Justice's British Gardener's Directory, Boyle's Lectures, Allan Ramsay's Works, Taylor's Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin, A Select Collection of English Songs, and Hervey's Meditations, had formed the whole of my reading. The collection of songs was my *vade mecum*. I pored over them, driving my cart, or walking to labor, song by song, verse by verse; carefully noting the true tender, or sublime, from affectation and fustian. I am convinced I owe to this practice much of my critic-craft, such as it is.

In my seventeenth year, to give my manners a brush, I went to a country dancing-school. My father had an unaccountable antipathy against these meetings, and my going was, what to this moment I repent, in opposition to his wishes. My father, as I said before, was subject to strong passions; from that instance of disobedience in me, he took a sort of dislike to me, which, I believe, was one cause of the dissipation which marked my succeeding years. I say dissipation, comparatively with the strictness, and sobriety, and regularity of presbyterian country life; for though the will-o'-wisp meteors of thoughtless whim were almost the sole lights of my path, yet early ingrained piety and virtue kept me for several years afterwards within the line of innocence. The great misfortune of my life was to want an aim. I had felt early some stirrings of ambition, but they were the blind gropings of Homer's Cyclops round the walls of his cave. I saw my father's situation entailed on me perpetual

labor. The only two openings by which I could enter the temple of fortune were the gate of niggardly economy, or the path of little chicaning bargain-making. The first is so contracted an aperture I never could squeeze myself into it—the last I always hated—there was contamination in the very entrance! Thus abandoned of aim or view in life, with a strong appetite for sociability, as well from native hilarity, as from a pride of observation and remark; a constitutional melancholy or hypochondriasm that made me fly solitude; add to these incentives to social life, my reputation for bookish knowledge, a certain wild logical talent, and a strength of thought, something like the rudiments of good sense; and it will not seem surprising that I was generally a welcome guest where I visited, or any great wonder that always, where two or three met together, there was I among them. But far beyond all other impulses of my heart, was *un penchant à l'adorable moitié du genre humain*. My heart was completely tinder, and was eternally lighted up by some goddess or other; and, as in every other warfare in this world, my fortune was various; sometimes I was received with favor, and sometimes I was mortified with a repulse. At the plough, scythe, or reap-hook, I feared no competitor, and thus I set absolute want at defiance; and as I never cared farther for my labors than while I was in actual exercise, I spent the evenings in the way after my own heart. A country lad seldom carries on a love adventure without an assisting confidant. I possessed a curiosity, zeal, and intrepid dexterity that recommended me as a proper second on these occasions; and I dare say, I felt as much pleasure in being in the secret of half the loves of the parish of Tarbolton, as ever did statesman in knowing the intrigues of half the courts of Europe. The very goosefeather in my hand seems to know instinctively the well-worn path of my imag-

ination, the favorite theme of my song ; and is with difficulty restrained from giving you a couple of paragraphs on the love-adventures of my compeers, the humble inmates of the farm-house and cottage ; but the grave sons of science, ambition, or avarice baptize these things by the name of follies. To the sons and daughters of labor and poverty they are matters of the most serious nature : to them the ardent hope, the stolen interview, the tender farewell, are the greatest and most delicious parts of their enjoyments.

Another circumstance in my life which made some alteration in my mind and manners, was, that I spent my nineteenth summer on a smuggling coast, a good distance from home, at a noted school, to learn mensuration, surveying, dialling, &c., in which I made a pretty good progress. But I made a greater progress in the knowledge of mankind. The contraband trade was at that time very successful, and it sometimes happened to me to fall in with those who carried it on. Scenes of swaggering riot and roaring dissipation were, till this time, new to me ; but I was no enemy to social life. Here, though I learnt to fill my glass, and to mix without fear in a drunken squabble, yet I went on with a high hand with my geometry, till the sun entered Virgo, a month which is always a carnival in my bosom, when a charming fillette, who lived next door to the school, upset my trigonometry, and set me off at a tangent from the spheres of my studies. I, however, struggled on with my sines and co-sines for a few days more ; but stepping into the garden one charming noon to take the sun's altitude, there I met my angel

“ Like Proserpine gathering flowers,
Herself a fairer flower —.”

It was in vain to think of doing any more good at school. The remaining week I staid I did nothing

but craze the faculties of my soul about her, or steal out to meet her; and the two last nights of my stay in the country, had sleep been a mortal sin, the image of this modest and innocent girl had kept me guiltless.

I returned home very considerably improved. My reading was enlarged with the very important addition of Thomson's and Shenstone's Works; I had seen human nature in a new phasis; and I engaged several of my schoolfellows to keep up a literary correspondence with me. This improved me in composition. I had met with a collection of letters by the wits of Queen Anne's reign, and I pored over them most devoutly. I kept copies of any of my own letters that pleased me, and a comparison between them and the composition of most of my correspondents flattered my vanity. I carried this whim so far, that though I had not three-farthings' worth of business in the world, yet almost every post brought me as many letters as if I had been a broad plodding son of the day-book and ledger.

My life flowed on much in the same course till my twenty-third year. *Vive l'amour, et vive la bagatelle*, were my sole principles of action. The addition of two more authors to my library gave me great pleasure; Sterne and Mackenzie—Tristram Shandy and the Man of Feeling were my bosom favorites. Poesy was still a darling walk for my mind, but it was only indulged in according to the humor of the hour. I had usually half a dozen or more pieces on hand; I took up one or other, as it suited the momentary tone of the mind, and dismissed the work as it bordered on fatigue. My passions, when once lighted up, raged like so many devils, till they got vent in rhyme; and then the conning over my verses, like a spell, soothed all into quiet! None of the rhymes of those days are in print, except "Winter, a dirge," the eldest of my

printed pieces ; “The Death of poor Maillie,” “John Barleycorn,” and songs first, second, and third. Song second was the ebullition of that passion which ended the forementioned school-business.

My twenty-third year was to me an important æra. Partly through whim, and partly that I wished to set about doing something in life, I joined a flax-dresser in a neighbouring town (Irvine), to learn his trade. This was an unlucky affair. My * * * and to finish the whole, as we were giving a welcome carousal to the new year, the shop took fire and burnt to ashes, and I was left, like a true poet, not worth a sixpence.

I was obliged to give up this scheme ; the clouds of misfortune were gathering thick round my father’s head ; and, what was worst of all, he was visibly far gone in a consumption ; and to crown my distresses, a *belle fille*, whom I adored, and who had pledged her soul to meet me in the field of matrimony, jilted me, with peculiar circumstances of mortification. The finishing evil that brought up the rear of this infernal file, was my constitutional melancholy being increased to such a degree, that for three months I was in a state of mind scarcely to be envied by the hopeless wretches who have got their mittimus—depart from me, ye cursed !

From this adventure I learned something of a town life ; but the principal thing which gave my mind a turn, was a friendship I formed with a young fellow, a very noble character, but a hapless son of misfortune. He was the son of a simple mechanic ; but a great man in the neighbourhood taking him under his patronage, gave him a genteel education, with a view of bettering his situation in life. The patron dying just as he was ready to launch out into the world, the poor fellow in despair went to sea ; where, after a variety of good and ill-fortune, a little before I was acquainted with him he had been set on shore by an American

privateer, on the wild coast of Connaught, stripped of every thing. I cannot quit this poor fellow's story without adding, that he is at this time master of a large West-Indiaman belonging to the Thames.

His mind was fraught with independence, magnanimity, and every manly virtue. I loved and admired him to a degree of enthusiasm, and of course strove to imitate him. In some measure I succeeded; I had pride before, but he taught it to flow in proper channels. His knowledge of the world was vastly superior to mine, and I was all attention to learn. He was the only man I ever saw who was a greater fool than myself where woman was the presiding star; but he spoke of illicit love with the levity of a sailor, which hitherto I had regarded with horror. Here his friendship did me a mischief, and the consequence was, that soon after I resumed the plough, I wrote the "Poet's Welcome."* My reading only increased while in this town by two stray volumes of Pamela, and one of Ferdinand Count Fathom, which gave me some idea of novels. Rhyme, except some religious pieces that are in print, I had given up; but meeting with Fergusson's Scottish Poems, I strung anew my wildly-sounding lyre with emulating vigor. When my father died, his all went among the hell-hounds that growl in the kennel of justice; but we made a shift to collect a little money in the family amongst us with which, to keep us together, my brother and I took a neighbouring farm. My brother wanted my hair-brained imagination, as well as my social and amorous madness; but in good sense, and every sober qualification, he was far my superior.

I entered on this farm with a full resolution, "come, go to, I will be wise!" I read farming books, I calculated crops; I attended markets: and in short, in

* "Rob the Rhymer's welcome to his Bastard Child."

spite of the devil, and the world, and the flesh, I believe I should have been a wise man; but the first year, from unfortunately buying bad seed, the second from a late harvest, we lost half our crops. This upset all my wisdom, and I returned, "like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire."

I now began to be known in the neighbourhood as a maker of rhymes. The first of my poetic offspring that saw the light, was a burlesque lamentation on a quarrel between two reverend Calvinists, both of them *dramatis personæ* in my "Holy Fair." I had a notion myself that the piece had some merit; but, to prevent the worst, I gave a copy of it to a friend, who was very fond of such things, and told him that I could not guess who was the author of it, but that I thought it pretty clever. With a certain description of the clergy, as well as laity, it met with a roar of applause. "Holy Willie's Prayer" next made its appearance, and alarmed the kirk-session so much, that they held several meetings to look over their spiritual artillery, if haply any of it might be pointed against profane rhymers. Unluckily for me, my wanderings led me on another side, within point-blank shot of their heaviest metal. This is the unfortunate story that gave rise to my printed poem, "The Lament." This was a most melancholy affair, which I cannot yet bear to reflect on, and had very nearly given me one or two of the principal qualifications for a place among those who have lost the chart, and mistaken the reckoning of rationality. I gave up my part of the farm to my brother; in truth it was only nominally mine; and made what little preparation was in my power for Jamaica. But, before leaving my native country for ever, I resolved to publish my poems. I weighed my productions as impartially as was in my power; I thought they had merit; and it was a delicious idea

that I should be called a clever fellow, even though it should never reach my ears—a poor negro-driver—or perhaps a victim to that inhospitable clime, and gone to the world of spirits! I can truly say, that *pauvre inconnu* as I then was, I had pretty nearly as high an idea of myself and of my works as I have at this moment, when the public has decided in their favor. It ever was my opinion that the mistakes and blunders, both in a rational and religious point of view, of which we see thousands daily guilty, are owing to their ignorance of themselves.—To know myself had been all along my constant study. I weighed myself alone; I balanced myself with others; I watched every means of information, to see how much ground I occupied as a man and as a poet; I studied assiduously Nature's design in my formation—where the lights and shades in my character were intended. I was pretty confident my poems would meet with some applause; but at the worst, the roar of the Atlantic would deafen the voice of censure, and the novelty of West Indian scenes make me forget neglect. I threw off six hundred copies, of which I had got subscriptions for about three hundred and fifty.—My vanity was highly gratified by the reception I met with from the public; and besides I pocketed, all expenses deducted, nearly twenty pounds. This sum came very seasonably, as I was thinking of indenting myself, for want of money to procure my passage. As soon as I was master of nine guineas, the price of wafting me to the torrid zone, I took a steerage passage in the first ship that was to sail from the Clyde, for

“Hungry ruin had me in the wind.”

I had been for some days skulking from covert to covert, under all the terrors of a jail; as some ill-advised people had uncoupled the merciless pack of the law at my heels. I had taken the last farewell

of my few friends; my chest was on the road to Greenock; I had composed the last song I should ever measure in Caledonia—"The gloomy night is gathering fast," when a letter from Dr. Blacklock to a friend of mine, overthrow all my schemes, by opening new prospects to my poetic ambition. The doctor belonged to a set of critics, for whose applause I had not dared to hope. His opinion, that I would meet with encouragement in Edinburgh for a second edition, fired me so much, that away I posted for that city, without a single acquaintance, or a single letter of introduction. The baneful star that had so long shed its blasting influence in my zenith, for once made a revolution to the nadir; and a kind Providence placed me under the patronage of one of the noblest of men, the Earl of Glencairn. *Oublie moi, grand Dieu, si jamais je l'oublie!*

I need relate no farther. At Edinburgh I was in a new world; I mingled among many classes of men, but all of them new to me, and I was all attention to "catch" the characters and "the manners living as they rise." Whether I have profited, time will show.

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My most respectful compliments to Miss Williams. Her very elegant and friendly letter I cannot answer at present, as my presence is requisite in Edinburgh, and I set out to-morrow. R. B.

[The first intimation which the Poet gives of his intention to write an account of himself is contained in his letter to Robert Muir: that he might do it more at his leisure, he retired for a while to Mauchline, and in the scenes that formerly inspired him, composed this most valuable biography.—"I mentioned to you," he says to an Edinburgh beauty, "my letter to Dr. Moore, giving an account of my life: it is truth, every word of it; and will give you the just idea of a man whom you have honored with your friendship. I am afraid you will hardly be able

to make sense of so torn a piece." To the same lady he says, on the same interesting subject, "I have been this morning taking a peep through, as Young finely says,

‘The dark postern of time long elapsed.’

And you will easily guess it was a rueful prospect. What a tissue of thoughtlessness, weakness, and folly! My life reminded me of a ruined temple! what proportion in some parts! what unsightly gaps, what prostrate ruins in others! I knelt down before The Father of mercies, and said, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son!’ I rose eased and strengthened. I despise the superstition of a fanatic, but I love the religion of a man. The future, said I to myself, is still before me—there let me

‘On reason build resolve,
That column of true majesty in man.’”

What Dr. Moore thought of the Poet’s memoir, we are not told: he wrote to him on the publication of his poems;—he acknowledged the powers of Burns in lyric composition, and in the homely and vigorous language of Caledonia: but like other learned men, desired to direct his muse to loftier subjects than the loves, and hopes, and jealousies, and joys of his fellow-peasants:—

“Some of the poems you have added in this last edition are very beautiful, particularly the ‘Winter Night,’ the ‘Address to Edinburgh,’ ‘Green grow the Rashes,’ and the two songs immediately following, the latter of which is exquisite. By the way, I imagine, you have a peculiar talent for such compositions, which you ought to indulge.* No kind of poetry demands more delicacy or higher polishing. Horace is more admired on account of his Odes than all his other writings. But nothing now added is equal to your ‘Vision’ and ‘Cotter’s Saturday night.’ In these are united fine imagery, natural and pathetic description, with sublimity of language and thought. It is evident that you already possess a great variety of expression and command of the English language; you ought, therefore, to deal more sparingly, for the future, in the provincial dialect—why should you, by using *that*, limit the number of your admirers to those who understand the Scottish, when you can extend it to all persons of taste who understand the Eng-

* The second and third volumes bear testimony to the accuracy of Dr. Moore’s judgment.

lish language? In my opinion you should plan some larger work than you have as yet attempted. I mean, reflect upon some proper subject, and arrange the plan in your mind, without beginning to execute any part of it till you have studied most of the best English poets, and read a little more of history. The Greek and Roman stories you can read in some abridgment, and soon become master of the most brilliant facts, which must highly delight a poetical mind. You *should* also, and very soon *may*, become master of the heathen mythology, to which there are everlasting allusions in all the poets, and which in itself is charmingly fanciful. What will require to be studied with more attention is modern history; that is, the history of France and Great Britain, from the beginning of Henry the Seventh's reign. I know very well you have a mind capable of attaining knowledge by a shorter process than is commonly used, and I am certain you are capable of making a better use of it, when attained, than is generally done."—ED.]

No. LIX.

TO ROBERT AINSLIE, Esq.

Mauchline, July, 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

MY life, since I saw you last, has been one continued hurry; that savage hospitality which knocks a man down with strong liquors, is the devil. I have a sore warfare in this world; the devil, the world, and the flesh are three formidable foes. The first I generally try to fly from; the second, alas! generally flies from me; but the third is my plague, worse than the ten plagues of Egypt.

I have been looking over several farms in this country; one in particular, in Nithsdale, pleased me so well, that if my offer to the proprietor is accepted, I shall commence farmer at Whit-Sunday. If farming do not appear eligible, I shall have recourse to my other shift; but this to a friend.

I set out for Edinburgh on Monday morning; how

long I stay there is uncertain, but you will know so soon as I can inform you myself. However I determine, poesy must be laid aside for some time ; my mind has been vitiated with idleness, and it will take a good deal of effort to habituate it to the routine of business.

I am, my dear Sir,
yours sincerely,

R. B.

[The Poet makes a similar complaint of the "savage hospitality" of his admirers to Mrs. Dunlop : he lived in days of hard drinking when all glasses which were raised to the lips full, were not set down till empty.—"Here I am," he says, in one of his letters, "sitting with an atmosphere of hypochondriac vapors about me, like the thickening fogs of an October morning. Job cursed his day, but I go farther ; I curse my day and doubly curse my night : by night I get myself fou' ; by night I sing merry songs ; by night

'I moop wi' the servant hizzie.'

In short, by night, as Sir John Falstaff says, 'I am, as one may say, little better than one of the wicked.' To-day has been a day of sackcloth and ashes. The parliamentary powers of my mind have had a solemn meeting to consider on a bill of reform : I dread an opposition in the lower house, but I am determined to carry it through."—ED.]

No. LX.

TO MR. ROBERT MUIR.

Stirling, 26th August, 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

I INTENDED to have written you from Edinburgh, and now write you from Stirling to make an excuse. Here am I, on my way to Inverness, with a truly original, but very worthy man, a Mr. Nicol, one of the masters of the High-school in Edinburgh. I left

Auld Reekie yesterday morning, and have passed, besides by-excursions, Linlithgow, Borrowstouness, Falkirk, and here am I undoubtedly. This morning I knelt at the tomb of Sir John the Graham, the gallant friend of the immortal Wallace; and two hours ago I said a fervent prayer for old Caledonia over the hole in a blue whinstone, where Robert de Bruce fixed his royal standard on the banks of Bannockburn; and just now, from Stirling Castle, I have seen by the setting sun the glorious prospect of the windings of Forth through the rich carse of Stirling, and skirting the equally rich carse of Falkirk. The crops are very strong, but so very late that there is no harvest, except a ridge or two perhaps in ten miles, all the way I have travelled from Edinburgh.

I left Andrew Bruce and family all well. I will be at least three weeks in making my tour, as I shall return by the coast, and have many people to call for.

My best compliments to Charles, our dear kinsman and fellow-saint; and Messrs. W. and H. Parkers. I hope Hughoc is going on and prospering with God and Miss M'Causlin.

If I could think on any thing sprightly, I should let you hear every other post; but a dull, matter-of-fact business like this scrawl, the less and seldomer one writes the better.

Among other matters-of-fact I shall add this, that I am and ever shall be,

My dear Sir,

Your obliged,—R. B.

[This is the first letter which the Poet wrote during his excursion northward with Nicol. No Scotsman will read without emotion what he says about Bannockburn: nor will those who are interested in his poetry fail to see that "Wee Hughoc," who figures in "Poor Maillie," is not forgotten; the Bard hopes he is prospering with God and Miss M'Causlin. The original letter is in the collection of my friend Mr. M'Crone.—ED.]

No. LXI.

TO GAVIN HAMILTON, Esq.

Stirling, 28th August, 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

HERE am I on my way to Inverness. I have rambled over the rich, fertile carses of Falkirk and Stirling, and am delighted with their appearance: richly waving crops of wheat, barley, &c., but no harvest at all yet, except, in one or two places, an old-wife's ridge. Yesterday morning I rode from this town up the meandering Devon's banks, to pay my respects to some Ayrshire folks at Harvieston. After breakfast, we made a party to go and see the famous Caudronlinn, a remarkable cascade in the Devon, about five miles above Harvieston; and after spending one of the most pleasant days I ever had in my life, I returned to Stirling in the evening. They are a family, Sir, though I had not had any prior tie; though they had not been the brother and sisters of a certain generous friend of mine, I would never forget them. I am told you have not seen them these several years, so you can have very little idea of what these young folks are now. Your brother is as tall as you are, but slender rather than otherwise; and I have the satisfaction to inform you that he is getting the better of those consumptive symptoms which I suppose you know were threatening him. His make, and particularly his manner, resemble you, but he will still have a finer face. (I put in the word *still*, to please Mrs. Hamilton.) Good sense, modesty, and at the same time a just idea of that respect that man owes to man, and has a right in his turn to exact, are striking features in his character; and, what with me is the Alpha and the Omega, he has a heart that might adorn the breast of a poet! Grace has a good figure, and the look of health and cheerfulness; but nothing else re-

markable in her person. I scarcely ever saw so striking a likeness as is between her and your little Beenie ; the mouth and chin particularly. She is reserved at first ; but as we grew better acquainted, I was delighted with the native frankness of her manner, and the sterling sense of her observation. Of Charlotte I cannot speak in common terms of admiration : she is not only beautiful but lovely. Her form is elegant ; her features not regular, but they have the smile of sweetness and the settled complacency of good nature in the highest degree ; and her complexion, now that she has happily recovered her wonted health, is equal to Miss Burnet's. After the exercise of our riding to the Falls, Charlotte was exactly Dr. Donne's mistress :—

—————“ Her pure and eloquent blood
Spoke in her cheeks, and so distinctly wrought,
That one would almost say her body thought.”

Her eyes are fascinating ; at once expressive of good sense, tenderness, and a noble mind.

I do not give you all this account, my good Sir, to flatter you. I mean it to reproach you. Such relations the first peer in the realm might own with pride ; then why do you not keep up more correspondence with these so amiable young folks ? I had a thousand questions to answer about you. I had to describe the little ones with the minuteness of anatomy. They were highly delighted when I told them that John was so good a boy and so fine a scholar, and that Willie was going on still very pretty ; but I have it in commission to tell her from them that beauty is a poor silly bauble without she be good. Miss Chalmers I had left in Edinburgh, but I had the pleasure of meeting with Mrs. Chalmers, only Lady Mackenzie being rather a little alarmingly ill of a sore throat somewhat marred our enjoyment.

I shall not be in Ayrshire for four weeks. My most

respectful compliments to Mrs. Hamilton, Miss Kennedy, and Doctor Mackenzie. I shall probably write him from some stage or other.

I am ever, Sir,

Yours most gratefully,

R. B.

[A curious account of the Poet's visit, on his second tour, to Mrs. Bruce, is given by Dr. Adair, who married Charlotte Hamilton, the far-famed "Maid of Devon:"—"A visit to Mrs. Bruce, of Clackmannan, a lady above ninety, the lineal descendant of that race which gave the Scottish throne its brightest ornament, interested his feelings more powerfully. This venerable dame, with characteristical dignity, informed me, on my observing that I believed she was descended from the family of Robert Bruce, that Robert Bruce was sprung from her family. 'Though almost deprived of speech by a paralytic affection, she preserved her hospitality and urbanity. She was in possession of the hero's helmet and two-handed sword, with which she conferred on Burns and myself the honor of knighthood, remarking, that she had a better right to confer that title than some people. You will of course conclude that the old lady's political tenets were as jacobitical as the Poet's, a conformity which contributed not a little to the cordiality of our reception and entertainment. She gave as her first toast after dinner, 'Awa' uncos,' or 'Away with the strangers:' who these strangers were, you will readily understand."—ED.]

No. LXII.

TO MR. WALKER,

BLAIR OF ATHOLE.

Inverness, 5th September, 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAVE just time to write the foregoing,* and to tell you that it was (at least most part of it) the effusion of an half-hour I spent at Bruar. I do not mean it

* The Humble Petition of Bruar-water, Vol. II. p. 39.

was extempore, for I have endeavoured to brush it up as well as Mr. Nicol's chat and the jogging of the chaise would allow. It eases my heart a good deal, as rhyme is the coin with which a poet pays his debts of honor or gratitude. What I owe to the noble family of Athole, of the first kind, I shall ever proudly boast; what I owe of the last, so help me God in my hour of need! I shall never forget.

The "little angel-band!" I declare I prayed for them very sincerely to-day at the Fall of Fyers. I shall never forget the fine family-piece I saw at Blair; the amiable, the truly noble duchess, with her smiling little seraph in her lap, at the head of the table: the lovely "olive plants," as the Hebrew bard finely says, round the happy mother: the beautiful Mrs. G—; the lovely, sweet Miss C. &c. I wish I had the powers of Guido to do them justice! My Lord Duke's kind hospitality—markedly kind indeed. Mr. Graham of Fintray's charms of conversation—Sir W. Murray's friendship. In short, the recollection of all that polite, agreeable company raises an honest glow in my bosom.

[Professor Walker, to whom this letter is addressed, was a native of Ayrshire, and an accomplished scholar and gentleman. Happening to be in Edinburgh when Burns made his first appearance there, he sought his acquaintance and was his frequent companion at the tables of Blair and Stewart. On his third and last excursion into the Highlands, the Poet found Walker an useful and prudent friend. With considerable tact he separated Burns and Nicol; and, having provided the latter with a fishing-rod and some choice wine to drink by the secluded pools of the Bruar, carried the Bard into the company of the ladies of the house of Athole, and made him acquainted with Graham of Fintray. He visited him, too, at Dumfries, and, after the Poet's death, when the copyright of Currie's edition had expired, he wrote, with considerable taste and feeling, his life anew, and edited his poems. All that passed under his own eye, the Professor related with a dramatic truth and ease: his account of

Burns at the table of Dr. Blair, and of his two days' conversation with him in 1795, are fine specimens of his talents. He died lately.—ED.]

No. LXIII.

TO MR. GILBERT BURNS.

Edinburgh, 17th September, 1787.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

I ARRIVED here safe yesterday evening, after a tour of twenty-two days, and travelling near six hundred miles, windings included. My farthest stretch was about ten miles beyond Inverness. I went through the heart of the Highlands by Crieff, Taymouth, the famous seat of Lord Breadalbane, down the Tay, among cascades and druidical circles of stones, to Dunkeld, a seat of the Duke of Athole; thence across Tay, and up one of his tributary streams to Blair of Athole, another of the duke's seats, where I had the honor of spending nearly two days with his grace and family; thence many miles through a wild country among cliffs gray with eternal snows and gloomy savage glens, till I crossed Spey and went down the stream through Strathspey, so famous in Scottish music; Badenoch, &c. till I reached Grant Castle, where I spent half a day with Sir James Grant and family; and then crossed the country for Fort George, but called by the way at Cawdor, the ancient seat of Macbeth; there I saw the identical bed, in which tradition says King Duncan was murdered: lastly, from Fort George to Inverness.

I returned by the coast, through Nairn, Forres, and so on, to Aberdeen, thence to Stonehive, where James Burness from Montrose, met me by appointment. I spent two days among our relations, and found our aunts, Jean and Isabel, still alive, and hale old women.

John Cairn, though born the same year with our father, walks as vigorously as I can: they have had several letters from his son in New York. William Brand is likewise a stout old fellow; but further particulars I delay till I see you, which will be in two or three weeks. The rest of my stages are not worth rehearsing: warm as I was from Ossian's country, where I had seen his very grave, what cared I for fishing-towns or fertile corses? I slept at the famous Brodie of Brodie's one night, and dined at Gordon Castle next day, with the duke, duchess, and family. I am thinking to cause my old mare to meet me, by means of John Ronald, at Glasgow; but you shall hear farther from me before I leave Edinburgh. My duty and many compliments from the north to my mother; and my brotherly compliments to the rest. I have been trying for a berth for William, but am not likely to be successful. Farewell.

R. B.

[The letters of the Poet to his brother are neither numerous nor important. There was little, save the tie of brotherhood, to unite them: Gilbert was a calm, considerate, and sensible man, with next to nothing of the enthusiast or the Poet in his nature: he was as unlikely to enter into the high musings and raptures of Robert as to carry conviviality to excess. As a critic and editor, he displayed some feeling, but no knowledge: his merits as a farmer stand on a surer foundation, though some men of the west aver that he was too much of an arm-chair agriculturalist. The fame of his brother, as well as his own merits, helped him onwards: he died lately, much and widely respected.—ED.]

No. LXIV.

TO Miss MARGARET CHALMERS,

(NOW MRS. HAY OF EDINBURGH.)

Sept. 26, 1787.

I SEND Charlotte the first number of the songs; I would not wait for the second number; I hate delays in little marks of friendship, as I hate dissimulation in the language of the heart. I am determined to pay Charlotte a poetic compliment, if I could hit on some glorious old Scotch air, in number second.* You will see a small attempt on a shred of paper in the book; but though Dr. Blacklock commended it very highly, I am not just satisfied with it myself. I intend to make it a description of some kind: the whining cant of love, except in real passion, and by a masterly hand is to me as insufferable as the preaching cant of old Father Smeaton, whig-minister at Kilmaurs. Darts, flames, Cupids, loves, graces, and all that far-rago, are just a Mauchline * * * a sensible rabble.

I got an excellent poetic epistle yesternight from the old, venerable author of "Tullochgorum," "John of Badenyon," &c. I suppose you know he is a clergyman. It is by far the finest poetic compliment I ever got. I will send you a copy it.

I go on Thursday or Friday to Dumfries, to wait on Mr. Miller about his farms.—Do tell that to Lady Mackenzie, that she may give me credit for a little wisdom. "I Wisdom dwell with Prudence." What a blessed fire-side! How happy should I be to pass a winter evening under their venerable roof! and smoke a pipe of tobacco, or drink water gruel with them! What solemn, lengthened, laughter-quashing

* Of the Scots Musical Museum.

gravity of phiz! What sage remarks on the good-for-nothing sons and daughters of indiscretion and folly! And what frugal lessons, as we straightened the fire-side circle, on the uses of the poker and tongs!

Miss N. is very well, and begs to be remembered in the old way to you. I used all my eloquence, all the persuasive flourishes of the hand, and heart melting modulation of periods in my power, to urge her out to Harvieston, but all in vain. My rhetoric seems quite to have lost its effect on the lovely half of mankind. I have seen the day—but that is a “tale of other years.” In my conscience I believe that my heart has been so oft on fire that it is absolutely vitrified. I look on the sex with something like the admiration with which I regard the starry sky in a frosty December night. I admire the beauty of the Creator’s workmanship; I am charmed with the wild but graceful eccentricity of their motions, and—wish them good night. I mean this with respect to a certain passion *dont j’ai eu l’honneur d’être un miserable esclave*: as for friendship, you and Charlotte have given me pleasure, permanent pleasure, “which the world cannot give, nor take away” I hope; and which will outlast the heavens and the earth.

R. B.

[To Margaret Chalmers the Poet addressed twelve or fourteen letters, most of them in his happiest manner. They contained it seems so many allusions to the beauty and so many compliments to the acquirements of Charlotte Hamilton, as was displeasing to

“The fairest maid on Devon banks.”

In a moment of prejudice or passion, she threw the originals into the fire; and nothing was saved except such fragments as were found among the Bard’s memoranda. They will appear in the order of their dates.—ED.]

No. LXV.

TO THE SAME.

Without date.

I HAVE been at Dumfries, and at one visit more shall be decided about a farm in that country. I am rather hopeless in it; but as my brother is an excellent farmer, and is, besides, an exceedingly prudent, sober man (qualities which are only a younger brother's fortune in our family), I am determined, if my Dumfries business fail me, to return into partnership with him, and at our leisure take another farm in the neighbourhood.

I assure you I look for high compliments from you and Charlotte on this very sage instance of my unfathomable, incomprehensible wisdom. Talking of Charlotte, I must tell her that I have to the best of my power, paid her a poetic compliment, now completed. The air is admirable: true old Highland. It was the tune of a Gaelic song, which an Inverness lady sung me when I was there; and I was so charmed with it that I begged her to write me a set of it from her singing for it had never been set before. I am fixed that it shall go in Johnson's next number; so Charlotte and you need not spend your precious time in contradicting me. I won't say the poetry is first-rate; though I am convinced it is very well; and, what is not always the case with compliments to ladies, it is not only sincere but just.

[Here follows the song of "The Banks of the Devon." See
Vol. II., p. 293.]

R. B.

No. LXVI.

TO JAMES HOY, Esq.

GORDON CASTLE.

Edinburgh, 20th October, 1787.

SIR,

I WILL defend my conduct in giving you this trouble, on the best of Christian principles—"Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them."—I shall certainly, among my legacies, leave my latest curse to that unlucky predicament which hurried—tore me away from Castle Gordon. May that obstinate son o' Latin prose [Nicol] be curst to Scotch mile periods, and damned to seven league paragraphs; while Declension and Conjugation, Gender, Number, and Time, under the ragged banners of Dissonance and Disarrangement, eternally rank against him in hostile array.

Allow me, Sir, to strengthen the small claim I have to your acquaintance, by the following request. An engraver, James Johnson, in Edinburgh, has, not from mercenary views, but from an honest Scotch enthusiasm, set about collecting all our native songs and setting them to music; particularly those that have never been set before. Clarke, the well known musician, presides over the musical arrangement, and Drs. Beattie and Blacklock, Mr. Tytler of Woodhouselee, and your humble servant to the utmost of his small power, assist in collecting the old poetry, or sometimes for a fine air make a stanza, when it has no words. The brats, too tedious to mention, claim a parental pang from my bardship. I suppose it will appear in Johnson's second number—the first was published before my acquaintance with him. My request is—"Cauld Kail in Aberdeen," is one intended for this number, and I beg a copy of his Grace of Gordon's words to

it, which you were so kind as to repeat to me. You may be sure we won't prefix the author's name, except you like, though I look on it as no small merit to this work that the names of many of the authors of our old Scotch songs, names almost forgotten, will be inserted. I do not well know where to write to you—I rather write at you; but if you will be so obliging, immediately on receipt of this, as to write me a few lines, I shall perhaps pay you in kind, though not in quality. Johnson's terms are:—each number a handsome pocket volume, to consist at least of a hundred Scotch songs, with basses for the harpsichord, &c. The price to subscribers 5s.; to non-subscribers 6s. He will have three numbers I conjecture.

My direction for two or three weeks will be at Mr. William Cruikshank's, St. James's square, New-town, Edinburgh.

I am,
Sir,
Your's to command,

R. B.

No. LXVII.

TO REV. JOHN SKINNER.

Edinburgh, October 25th, 1787.

REVEREND AND VENERABLE SIR,

ACCEPT, in plain dull prose, my most sincere thanks for the best poetical compliment I ever received. I assure you, Sir, as a poet, you have conjured up an airy demon of vanity in my fancy, which the best abilities in your other capacity would be ill able to lay. I regret, and while I live I shall regret, that when I was in the north, I had not the pleasure of paying a younger brother's dutiful respect to the author of the best Scotch song ever Scotland saw—

“Tullochgorum’s” my delight! The world may think slightly of the craft of song-making, if they please, but, as Job says—“O! that mine adversary had written a book!”—let them try. There is a certain something in the old Scotch songs, a wild happiness of thought and expression, which peculiarly marks them, not only from English songs, but also from the modern efforts of song-wrights, in our native manner and language. The only remains of this enchantment, these spells of the imagination, rests with you. Our true brother, Rose of Lochlee, was likewise “owrie cannie”—a “wild warlock”—but now he sings among the “sons of tht morning.”

I have often wished, and will certainly endeavour, to form a kind of common acquaintance among all the genuine sons of Caledonian song. The world, busy in low prosaic pursuits, may overlook most of us; but “reverence thyself.” The world is not our *peers*, so we challenge the jury. We can lash that world, and find ourselves a very great source of amusement and happiness independent of that world.

There is a work going on in Edinburgh, just now, which claims your best assistance. An engraver in this town has set about collecting and publishing all the Scotch songs, with the music, that can be found. Songs in the English language, if by Scotchmen, are admitted, but the music must all be Scotch. Drs. Beattie and Blacklock are lending a hand, and the first musician in town presides over that department. I have been absolutely crazed about it, collecting old stanzas, and every information remaining respecting their origin, authors, &c. &c. This last is but a very fragment business; but at the end of his second number—the first is already published—a small account will be given of the authors, particularly to preserve those of latter times. Your three songs, “Tullochgorum,” “John of Badenyon,” and

“Ewie wi’ the crookit Horn,” go in this second number. I was determined, before I got your letter, to write you, begging that you would let me know where the editions of these pieces may be found, as you would wish them to continue in future times ; and if you would be so kind to this undertaking as send any songs, of your own or others, that you would think proper to publish, your name will be inserted among the other authors,—“Nill ye, will ye.” One half of Scotland already give your songs to other authors. Paper is done. I beg to hear from you ; the sooner the better, as I leave Edinburgh in a fortnight or three weeks.—I am,

With the warmest sincerity, Sir,

You obliged humble servant,—R. B.

[The songs of “Tullochgorum” and “John of Badenyon” have made the name of Skinner dear to all lovers of Scottish poetry. He was a man cheerful and pious, and performed his duties as episcopal pastor of Longside for nearly sixty-five years. Burns met his son, afterwards Bishop of Aberdeen, during his last tour in the north, and lamented that he did not know where Linshart—his father’s residence—lay, as he would have gone twenty miles out of his way to have seen the author of “Tullochgorum.” The poetical works of Skinner were collected soon after his death, on the 16th of June, 1807, and published in Edinburgh. He was a wit as well as a priest and poet. His grandson, John, paid less regard to his lessons than he wished : he suddenly desisted from instructing him, and said—“Oh ! I forgot the old prophecy—Thomas the Rhymer has settled the matter—I shall trouble myself no farther.” The boy turned to his grandfather, and said, “What has he said of me, grandpapa ?”—“O ! more than I like ; ye shall hear—

“ ‘The world shall four John Skinners see,
The first shal teach a school ;
The other two shall parsons be,
The *fourth* shall be *fool* !’ ”

John Skinner the fourth flew to his task, and became a learned man.—ED.]

No. LXVIII.

TO JAMES HOY Esq.

GORDON CASTLE.

Edinburgh, 6th November, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

I WOULD have wrote you immediately on receipt of your kind letter, but a mixed impulse of gratitude and esteem whispered to me that I ought to send you smething by way of return. When a poet owes anything, particularly when he is indebted for good offices, the payment that usually recurs to him—the only coin indeed in which he is probably conversant—is rhyme. Johnson sends the books by the fly, as directed, and begs me to enclose his most grateful thanks: my return I intended should have been one or two poetic bagatelles which the world have not seen, or, perhaps, for obvious reasons, cannot see. These I shall send you before I leave Edinburgh. They may make you laugh a little, which, on the whole, is no bad way of spending one's precious hours and still more precious breath: at any rate, they will be, though a small, yet a very sincere mark of my respectful esteem for a gentleman whose farther acquaintance I should look upon as a peculiar obligation.

The duke's song, independent totally of his dukeship, charms me. There is I know not what of wild happiness of thought and expression peculiarly beautiful in the old Scottish song style, of which his Grace, old venerable Skinner, the author of "Tullochgorum," &c., and the late Ross, at Lochlee, of true Scottish poetic memory, are the only modern instances that I recollect, since Ramsay with his contemporaries, and poor Bob Fergusson went to the world of deathless existence and truly immortal song. The mob of

mankind, that many-headed beast, would laugh at so serious a speech about an old song; but, as Job says, "O that mine adversary had written a book!" Those who think that composing a Scotch song is a trifling business—let them try.

I wish my Lord Duke would pay a proper attention to the Christian admonition—"Hide not your candle under a bushel," but "Let your light shine before men." I could name half a dozen dukes that I guess are a devilish deal worse employed; nay, I question if there are half a dozen better: perhaps there are not half that scanty number whom Heaven has favored with the tuneful, happy, and, I will say, glorious gift.

I am, dear Sir,

Your obliged humble servant,—R. B.

[James Hoy, librarian to the Duke of Gordon, was in all respects a very remarkable character: in singleness of heart and simplicity of manners he rivalled Dominie Sampson; nor did a forty years' intercourse with the wealthy and far-descended work any change in his manners—the originality of the man was neither smoothed nor softened, nor did it lessen in the least his stoical indifference to riches. His love of learning, and the example of simplicity and virtue which he exhibited, gained him respect far and wide: the Duke's library was to him a castle, nor did he love to leave his command, save when on Sunday he rode into Elgin, to attend the Seceder meeting-house, for he was a zealous dissenter from the established kirk. It was the business of Hoy, during the day, to store his mind with all such knowledge as the publications of the time supplied; and then over a bottle of claret, after dinner, impart to his Grace of Gordon all that he reckoned valuable or important. He studied astronomy, entomology, and botany, and made valuable observations on each: if he despised wealth, he was equally indifferent about fame; his self-denial regarding all things that worldly men valued was wonderful. Burns was delighted with his blunt straightforward manner; and the librarian strove, it is said, to repay it by giving the postboy a crown to contrive, no matter how, to stop the Bard's departure from Fochabers. The fierce impetuosity of Nicol prevented this.

[To Robert Carruthers, the able editor of the *Inverness Courier*, I am indebted for this clever account of Hoy; but I owe my friend and fellow-townsmen more than this; he gave me much valuable information respecting the ways of Burns in Dumfries—supplied me with several interesting anecdotes, and communicated much useful matter for the notes.—ED.]

No. LXIX.

TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE,

EDINBURGH.

*Edinburgh, Sunday Morning,
Nov. 23, 1787.*

I BEG, my dear Sir, you would not make any appointment to take us to Mr. Ainslie's to-night. On looking over my engagements, constitution, present state of my health, some little vexatious soul concerns, &c., I find I can't sup abroad to-night. I shall be in to-day till one o'clock if you have a leisure hour.

You will think it romantic when I tell you, that I find the idea of your friendship almost necessary to my existence.—You assume a proper length of face in my bitter hours of blue-devilism, and you laugh fully up to my highest wishes at my good things.—I don't know upon the whole, if you are one of the first fellows in God's world, but you are so to me. I tell you this just now in the conviction that some inequalities in my temper and manner may perhaps sometimes make you suspect that I am not so warmly as I ought to be your friend.

R. B.

[The Poet unbosomed himself with much freedom to Robert Ainslie.—“I have not a friend on earth,” says the Bard, “besides yourself to whom I can talk nonsense, without forfeiting some degree of his esteem. Now to one like me who never

weighs what he says, such a friend is a treasure. I have never been a knave, but I have been a fool all my life, and, in spite of all my endeavours, I see now plainly, that I shall never be wise. It rejoices my heart to have met with such a fellow as you, who, though you are not such a hopeless fool as I, yet I trust you will never be so far left to yourself as to grow so very wise that you will in the least disrespect an honest fellow, because he is a fool. In short, I have set you down as the staff of my old age, when the whole host of my friends will, after a decent show of pity, have forgot me.

“ ‘ Though in the morn comes sturt and strife,
 Yet joy may come ere noon ;
 And I hope to live a merry, merry life,
 When a’ their days are done.’ ”—ED.]

No. LXX.

TO THE EARL OF GLENCAIRN.

Edinburgh, 1787.

MY LORD,

I KNOW your lordship will disapprove of my ideas in a request I am going to make to you ; but I have weighed, long and seriously weighed, my situation, my hopes and turn of mind, and am fully fixed to my scheme if I can possibly effectuate it. I wish to get into the Excise : I am told that your lordship’s interest will easily procure me the grant from the commissioners ; and your lordship’s patronage and goodness, which have already rescued me from obscurity, wretchedness, and exile, embolden me to ask that interest. You have likewise put it in my power to save the little tie of home that sheltered an aged mother, two brothers, and three sisters from destruction. There, my lord, you have bound me over to the highest gratitude.

My brother’s farm is but a wretched lease, but I think he will probably weather out the remaining seven years of it ; and after the assistance which I

have given and will give him, to keep the family together, I think, by my guess, I shall have rather better than two hundred pounds, and instead of seeking, what is almost impossible at present to find, a farm that I can certainly live by, with so small a stock, I shall lodge this sum in a banking-house, a sacred deposit, excepting only the calls of uncommon distress or necessitous old age.

These, my lord, are my views : I have resolved from the maturest deliberation ; and now I am fixed, I shall leave no stone unturned to carry my resolve into execution. Your lordship's patronage is the strength of my hopes ; nor have I yet applied to any body else. Indeed my heart sinks within me at the idea of applying to any other of the great who have honored me with their countenance. I am ill-qualified to dog the heels of greatness with the impertinence of solicitation and tremble nearly as much at the thought of the cold promise as the cold denial ; but to your lordship I have not only the honor, the comfort, but the pleasure of being

Your lordship's much obliged

And deeply indebted humble servant,

R. B.

[For some notice of this nobleman, see note, Vol. II. page 139.—Ed.]

No. LXXI.

TO JAMES DALRYMPLE, Esq.,

ORANGEFIELD.

Edinburgh, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

I SUPPOSE the devil is so elated with his success with you, that he is determined by a *coup de main*

to complete his purposes on you all at once, in making you a poet. I broke open the letter you sent me; hummed over the rhymes; and, as I saw they were extempore, said to myself, they were very well; but when I saw at the bottom a name that I shall ever value with grateful respect, "I gapit wide, but naething spak." I was nearly as much struck as the friends of Job, of affliction-bearing memory, when they sat down with him seven days and seven nights, and spake not a word.

I am naturally of a superstitious cast, and as soon as my wonder-scared imagination regained its consciousness, and resumed its functions, I cast about what this mania of yours might portend. My foreboding ideas had the wide stretch of possibility; and several events, great in their magnitude, and important in their consequences, occurred to my fancy. The downfall of the conclave, or the crushing of the Cork rumps; a ducal coronet to Lord George Gordon, and the protestant interest; or St. Peter's keys to * * * *.

You want to know how I come on. I am just in *statu quo*, or, not to insult a gentleman with my Latin, in "auld use and wont." The noble Earl of Glencairn took me by the hand to-day, and interested himself in my concerns, with a goodness like that benevolent being, whose image he so richly bears. He is a stronger proof of the immortality of the soul, than any that philosophy ever produced. A mind like his can never die. Let the worshipful squire H. L., or the reverend Mass J. M. go into their primitive nothing. At best, they are but ill-digested lumps of chaos, only one of them strongly tinged with bituminous particles and sulphureous effluvia. But my noble patron, eternal as the heroic swell of magnanimity, and the generous throb of benevolence, shall look on with princely eye at "the war of elements, the wreck of matter, and the crush of worlds."

R. B.

[James Dalrymple, Esq. of Orangefield, interested himself in the fortunes of Burns: he was a gentleman by birth, and, as this letter intimates, something of a poet. Who the worshipful squire H. L. was, we have not been told: Mass J. M. was probably Mr. Moodie, minister of Riccarton.—ED.]

No. LXXII.

TO MISS M——N.

*Saturday Noon, No. 2, St. James's Square,
New Town, Edinburgh.*

HERE have I sat, my dear Madam, in the stony altitude of perplexed study for fifteen vexatious minutes, my head askew, bending over the intended card; my fixed eye insensible to the very light of day poured around; my pendulous goose-feather, loaded with ink, hanging over the future letter, all for the important purpose of writing a complimentary card to accompany your trinket.

Compliment is such a miserable Greenland expression, lies at such a chilly polar distance from the torrid zone of my constitution, that I cannot for the very soul of me, use it to any person for whom I have the twentieth part of the esteem every one must have for you who knows you.

As I leave town in three or four days, I can give myself the pleasure of calling on you only for a minute. Tuesday evening, some time about seven or after, I shall wait on you for your farewell commands.

The hinge of your box I put into the hands of the proper connoisseur. The broken glass, likewise, went under review; but deliberative wisdom thought it would too much endanger the whole fabric.

I am, dear Madam,

With all sincerity of enthusiasm,

Your very obedient servant,

R. B.

[Concerning the name of this lady inquiries have been made in vain. The communication appeared, for the first time, in "Burns' Letters to Clarinda," a little work which was speedily suppressed. The import of those celebrated letters has been much misrepresented; they are sentimental flirtations chiefly—a sort of Corydon-and-Phillis affair, with here and there passages over-warm, and expressions too graphic, such as all had to endure who were honored with the correspondence of Burns.—ED.]

No. LXXIII.

TO MISS CHALMERS.

Edinburgh, Nov. 21, 1787.

I HAVE one vexatious fault to the kindly-welcome, well-filled sheet which I owe to your and Charlotte's goodness—it contains too much sense, sentiment, and good-spelling. It is impossible that even you two, whom I declare to my God I will give credit for any degree of excellence the sex are capable of attaining, it is impossible you can go on to correspond at that rate; so, like those who, Shenstone says, retire because they have made a good speech, I shall, after a few letters, hear no more of you. I insist that you shall write whatever comes first: what you see, what you read, what you hear, what you admire, what you dislike, trifles, bagatelles, nonsense; or to fill up a corner, e'en put down a laugh at full length. Now none of your polite hints about flattery; I leave that to your lovers, if you have or shall have any; though, thank heaven, I have found at last two girls who can be luxuriantly happy in their own minds and with one another, without that commonly necessary appendage to female bliss—A LOVER.

Charlotte and you are just two favorite resting-places for my soul in her wanderings through the weary, thorny wilderness of this world. God knows I am ill-

fitted for the struggle : I glory in being a Poet, and I want to be thought a wise man—I would fondly be generous, and I wish to be rich. After all, I am afraid I am a lost subject. “Some folk hae a hantle o’ fauts, an’ I’m but a ne’er-do-weel.”

Afternoon.—To close the melancholy reflections at the end of last sheet, I shall just add a piece of devotion commonly known in Carrick by the title of the “Wabster’s grace :”—

“Some say we’re thieves, and e’en sae are we,
Some say we lie, and e’en sae do we!
Gude forgie us, and I hope sae will he!
—Up and to your looms, lads.”

R. B.

No. LXXIV.

TO THE SAME.

Edinburgh, Dec. 12, 1787.

I AM here under the care of a surgeon with a bruised limb extended on a cushion; and the tints of my mind vying with the livid horror preceding a midnight thunder-storm. A drunken coachman was the cause of the first, and incomparably the lightest evil; misfortune, bodily constitution, hell, and myself have formed a “quadruple alliance” to guarantee the other. I got my fall on Saturday, and am getting slowly better.

I have taken tooth and nail to the Bible, and am got through the five books of Moses, and half way in Joshua. It is really a glorious book. I sent for my bookbinder to-day, and ordered him to get me an octavo Bible in sheets, the best paper and print in town; and bind it with all the elegance of his craft.

I would give my best song to my worst enemy, I mean the merit of making it, to have you and Charlotte

by me. You are angelic creatures, and would pour oil and wine into my wounded spirit.

I enclose you a proof copy of the "Banks of the Devon," which present with my best wishes to Charlotte. The "Ochel-hills" you shall probably have next week for yourself. None of your fine speeches!

R. B.

No. LXXV.

TO THE SAME.

Edinburgh, Dec, 19. 1787.

I BEGIN this letter in answer to yours of the 17th current, which is not yet cold since I read it. The atmosphere of my soul is vastly clearer than when I wrote you last. For the first time, yesterday I crossed the room on crutches. It would do your heart good to see my bardship, not on my poetic, but on my oaken stilts; throwing my best leg with an air! and with as much hilarity in my gait and countenance, as a May frog leaping across the newly harrowed ridge, enjoying the fragrance of the refreshed earth, after the long-expected shower!

I can't say I am altogether at my ease when I see any where in my path that meagre, squalid, famine-faced spectre, poverty; attended as he always is by iron-fisted oppression, and leering contempt; but I have sturdily withstood his buffetings many a hard-labored day already, and still my motto is—I DARE! My worst enemy is *moi-même*. I lie so miserably open to the inroads and incursions of a mischievous, light-armed, well-mounted banditti, under the banners of imagination, whim, caprice, and passion: and the heavy-armed veteran regulars of wisdom, prudence, and forethought move so very, very slow, that I am

almost in a state of perpetual warfare, and alas! frequent defeat. There are just two creatures I would envy, a horse in his wild state traversing the forests of Asia, or an oyster on some of the desert shores of Europe. The one has not a wish without enjoyment, the other has neither wish nor fear. R. B.

[The eloquent hypochondriasm of the concluding passage of this letter called forth the commendations of Francis Jeffrey, lately Lord Advocate of Scotland, and now a Lord of the Court of Session.—ED.]

No. LXXVI.

TO SIR JOHN WHITEFOORD.

Edinburgh, December, 1787.

SIR,

MR. MACKENZIE, in Mauchline, my very warm and worthy friend, has informed me how much you are pleased to interest yourself in my fate as a man, and (what to me is incomparably dearer) my fame as a poet. I have, Sir, in one or two instances been patronized by those of your character in life, when I was introduced to their notice by * * * * * friends to them, and honored acquaintances to me; but you are the first gentleman in the country whose benevolence and goodness of heart has interested himself for me unsolicited and unknown. I am not master enough of the etiquette of these matters to know, nor did I stay to inquire, whether formal duty bade, or cold propriety disallowed, my thanking you in this manner, as I am convinced, from the light in which you kindly view me, that you will do me the justice to believe this letter is not the manœuvre of the needy, sharpening author, fastening on those in upper life, who honor him with a little notice of him or his works. Indeed,

the situation of poets is generally such, to a proverb, as many, in some measure, palliate that prostitution of heart and talents they have at times been guilty of. I do not think prodigality is, by any means, a necessary concomitant of a poetic turn, but I believe a careless, indolent attention to economy, is almost inseparable from it; then there must be in the heart of every bard of Nature's making, a certain modest sensibility, mixed with a kind of pride, that will ever keep him out of the way of those windfalls of fortune which frequently light on hardy impudence and foot-licking servility. It is not easy to imagine a more helpless state, than he whose poetic fancy unfits him for the world and whose character as a scholar gives him some pretensions to the *politesse* of life—yet is as poor as I am.

For my part, I thank Heaven, my star has been kinder; learning never elevated my ideas above the peasant's shed, and I have an independent fortune at the plough-tail.

I was surprised to hear that any one who pretended in the least to the manners of the gentleman, should be so foolish, or worse, as to stoop to traduce the morals of such a one as I am, and so inhumanly cruel, too, as to meddle with that late most unfortunate, unhappy part of my story. With a tear of gratitude, I thank you, Sir, for the warmth with which you interposed in behalf of my conduct. I am, I acknowledge, too frequently the sport of whim, caprice, and passion, but reverence to God, and integrity to my fellow-creatures, I hope I shall ever preserve. I have no return, Sir, to make you for your goodness but one—a return which, I am persuaded, will not be unacceptable—the honest, warm wishes of a grateful heart for your happiness, and every one of that lovely flock, who stand to you in a filial relation. If ever calumny aim the poisoned shaft at them, may friendship be by to ward the blow!

R. B.

[Who the person was who sought to lessen the Poet in the estimation of his newly-acquired friends, and inhumanly alluded to his conduct in the unhappy affair which occasioned his poem of "The Lament," we happen not to know, and we will not inquire—such spirits are not rare in the world; but who would wish to save them from oblivion?—a fate too good for them.—ED.]

No. LXXVII.

TO MISS WILLIAMS,

ON READING THE POEM OF THE SLAVE TRADE.

Edinburgh, Dec. 1787.

I KNOW very little of scientific criticism, so all I can pretend to in that intricate art is merely to note, as I read along, what passages strike me as being uncommonly beautiful, and where the expression seems to be perplexed or faulty.

The poem opens finely. There are none of these idle prefatory lines which one may skip over before one comes to the subject. Verses 9th and 10th in particular,

“Where ocean’s unseen bound
Leaves a drear world of waters round,”

are truly beautiful. The simile of the hurricane is likewise fine; and, indeed, beautiful as the poem is, almost all the similes rise decidedly above it. From verse 31st to verse 50th is a pretty eulogy on Britain. Verse 36th, “That foul drama deep with wrong,” is nobly expressive. Verse 46th, I am afraid, is rather unworthy of the rest; “to dare to feel” is an idea that I do not altogether like. The contrast of valor and mercy, from the 46th verse to the 50th, is admirable.

Either my apprehension is dull, or there is something a little confused in the apostrophe to Mr. Pitt.

Verse 55th is the antecedent to verses 57th and 58th, but in verse 58th the connection seems ungrammatical:—

“ Powers * * * * *
 * * * * * *

With no gradations mark'd their flight,
 But rose at once to glory's height.”

Ris'n should be the word instead of rose. Try it in prose. Powers,—their flight marked by no gradations, but [the same powers] risen at once to the height of glory. Likewise, verse 53rd, “For this,” is evidently meant to lead on the sense of the verses 59th, 60th, 61st, and 62nd: but let us try how the thread of connection runs,—

“ For this * * * *
 * * * * *

The deeds of mercy, that embrace
 A distant sphere, an alien race,
 Shall virtue's lips record, and claim
 The fairest honors of thy name.”

I beg pardon if I misapprehend the matter, but this appears to me the only imperfect passage in the poem. The comparison of the sun-beam is fine.

The compliment to the Duke of Richmond is, I hope, as just as it is certainly elegant. The thought,

“ Virtue * * * *
 * * * * *

Sends from her unsullied source,
 The gems of thought their purest force,”

is exceeding beautiful. The idea, from verse 81st to the 85th, that the “blest decree” is like the beams of morning ushering in the glorious day of liberty, ought not to pass unnoticed or unapplauded. From verse 85th to verse 108th, is an animated contrast between the unfeeling selfishness of the oppressor on the one hand, and the misery of the captive on the other. Verse 88th might perhaps be amended thus: “Nor ever *quit* her narrow maze.” We are said to

pass a bound, but we *quit* a maze. Verse 100th is exquisitely beautiful:—

“They, whom wasted blessings tire.”

Verse 110th is I doubt a clashing of metaphors; “to load a span” is, I am afraid, an unwarrantable expression. In verse 114th, “Cast the universe in shade,” is a fine idea. From the 115th verse to the 142nd is a striking description of the wrongs of the poor African. Verse 120th, “The load of unremitted pain,” is a remarkable, strong expression. The address to the advocates for abolishing the slave-trade, from verse 143rd to verse 208th is animated with the true life of genius. The picture of oppression,—

“While she links her impious chain,
And calculates the price of pain;
Weighs agony in sordid scales,
And marks if death or life prevails,”—

is nobly executed.

What a tender idea is in verse 180th! Indeed, that whole description of home may vie with Thomson’s description of home, somewhere in the beginning of his *Autumn*. I do not remember to have seen a stronger expression of misery than is contained in these verses:—

“Condemned, severe extreme, to live
When all is fled that life can give.”

The comparison of our distant joys to distant objects is equally original and striking.

The character and manners of the dealer in the infernal traffic is a well done though a horrid picture. I am not sure how far introducing the sailor was right; for, though the sailor’s common characteristic is generosity, yet in this case, he is certainly not only an unconcerned witness, but, in some degree, an efficient agent in the business. Verse 224th is a nervous expressive—“The heart convulsive anguish breaks.” The description of the captive wretch when he arrives

in the West Indies, is carried on with equal spirit. The thought that the oppressor's sorrow on seeing the slave pine, is like the butcher's regret when his destined lamb dies a natural death, is exceedingly fine.

I am got so much into the cant of criticism, that I begin to be afraid lest I have nothing except the cant of it; and instead of elucidating my author, I am only benighting myself. For this reason, I will not pretend to go through the whole poem. Some few remaining beautiful lines, however, I cannot pass over. Verse 280th is the strongest description of selfishness I ever saw. The comparison in verses 285th and 286th is new and fine; and the line, "Your arms to penury you lend," is excellent.

In verse 317th, "like" should certainly be "as" or "so;" for instance—

"His sway the hardened bosom leads
To cruelty's remorseless deeds;
As (or, so) the blue lightning when it springs
With fury on its livid wings,
Darts on the goal with rapid force,
Nor heeds that ruin marks its course."

If you insert the word "like" where I have placed "as," you must alter "darts" to "darting," and "heeds" to "heeding," in order to make it grammar. A tempest is a favorite subject with the poets, but I do not remember any thing even in Thomson's *Winter* superior to your verses from the 347th to the 351st. Indeed, the last simile, beginning with "Fancy may dress," &c., and ending with the 350th verse, is, in my opinion, the most beautiful passage in the poem; it would do honor to the greatest names that ever graced our profession.

I will not beg your pardon, Madam, for these strictures, as my conscience tells me, that for once in my life I have acted up to the duties of a Christian, in doing as I would be done by.

R. B.

[My friend Thomas Pringle, poet and philanthropist, kindly supplied me with a copy of this letter, and remarked truly that,—"The critique, though not without some traits of the Poet's usual sound judgment and discrimination, appears on the whole to be much in the strain of those gallant and flattering responses which men of genius sometimes find it incumbent to issue when consulted upon the productions of their female admirers." In one of her letters to Burns, the poetess, after expressing her admiration of "The Vision," "The Cotter's Saturday Night," and "The Mouse," says,—“My mother's family is Scotch, and the dialect has been familiar to me from my infancy : I am, therefore, qualified to taste the charms of your native poetry, and as I feel the strongest attachment for Scotland, I share the triumph of your country in producing your laurels.” The merits of Miss Williams are widely known ; nor is it little honor to her muse that her fine song of “Evan Banks” has been imputed to Burns by Cromek and other good judges.—ED.]

No. LXXVIII.

TO MR. RICHARD BROWN,

IRVINE.

Edinburgh, 30th Dec. 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAVE met with few things in life which have given me more pleasure than Fortune's kindness to you since those days in which we met in the vale of misery ; as I can honestly say, that I never knew a man who more truly deserved it, or to whom my heart more truly wished it. I have been much indebted since that time to your story and sentiments for steeling my mind against evils, of which I have had a pretty decent share. My will-o'-wisp fate you know : do you recollect a Sunday we spent together in Eglinton woods ? You told me, on my repeating some verses to you, that you wondered that I could resist the temptation of sending verses of such merit to a magazine. It was from this remark I derived that idea of my own

pieces, which encouraged me to endeavour at the character of a poet. I am happy to hear that you will be two or three months at home. As soon as a bruised limb will permit me, I shall return to Ayrshire, and we shall meet; "and faith, I hope we'll not sit dumb, nor yet cast out!"

I have much to tell you "of men, their manners, and their ways," perhaps a little of the other sex. Apropos, I beg to be remembered to Mrs. Brown. There I doubt not, my dear friend, but you have found substantial happiness. I expect to find you something of an altered but not a different man; the wild, bold, generous young fellow composed into the steady affectionate husband, and the fond careful parent. For me I am just the same will-o'-wisp being I used to be. About the first and fourth quarters of the moon, I generally set in for the trade wind of wisdom; but about the full and change, I am the luckless victim of mad tornadoes, which blow me into chaos. Almighty love still reigns and revels in my bosom; and I am at this moment ready to hang myself for a young Edinburgh widow, who has wit and wisdom more murderously fatal than the assassinating stiletto of the Sicilian banditti, or the poisoned arrow of the savage African. My Highland dirk, that used to hang beside my crutches, I have gravely removed into a neighbouring closet, the key of which I cannot command in case of spring-tide paroxysms. You may guess of her wit by the following verses, which she sent me the other day:—

"Talk not of love, it gives me pain,
For love has been my foe;
He bound me with an iron chain,
And plunged me deep in woe!

"But friendship's pure and lasting joys,
My heart was formed to prove,—
Then welcome win and wear the prize,
But never talk of love!

"Your friendship much can make me blest—

O why that bliss destroy?

Why urge the odious one request,

You know I must deny?"

My best compliments to our friend Allan. Adieu!

R. B.

[The person to whom this letter is addressed was the hapless son of misfortune alluded to by Burns in his communication to Dr. Moore. The morning of his life was indeed changeable and stormy; but fortitude, perseverance, and prudence carried him over the troubled waters, and the afternoon of his existence was tranquil and sunny. He corresponded for a time, as will be seen, with the Poet, and even threatened a visit to Ellisland; but on learning how freely he had been written about in the memoir, he changed his mind, and for many years loved not to allude to the Bard of Kyle. He died lately, much respected and regretted in Greenock. To the ingenious editor of "The Greenock Intelligencer" I am indebted for some of this information, as well as for some sensible observations on the works of the Poet.—ED.]

No. LXXIX.

TO GAVIN HAMILTON.

Edinburgh, Dec. 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

IT is indeed with the highest pleasure that I congratulate you on the return of days of ease and nights of pleasure, after the horrid hours of misery in which I saw you suffering existence when last in Ayrshire; I seldom pray for any body, "I'm baith dead-sweer and wretched ill o't;" but most fervently do I beseech the Power that directs the world, that you may live long and be happy, but live no longer than you are happy. It is needless for me to advise you to have a reverend care of your health. I know you will make it a point never at one time to drink more than a pint

of wine (I mean an English pint), and that you will never be witness to more than one bowl of punch at a time, and that cold drams you will never more taste; and, above all things, I am convinced, that after drinking perhaps boiling punch; you will never mount your horse and gallop home in a chill late hour. Above all things, as I understand you are in habits of intimacy with that Boanerges of gospel powers, Father Auld, be earnest with him that he will wrestle in prayer for you, that you may see the vanity of vanities in trusting to, or even practising the casual moral works of charity, humanity, generosity, and forgiveness of things, which you practised so flagrantly that it was evident you delighted in them, neglecting, or perhaps profanely despising, the wholesome doctrine of faith without works, the only author of salvation. A hymn of thanksgiving would, in my opinion, be highly becoming from you at present, and in my zeal for your well-being, I earnestly press on you to be diligent in chaunting over the two enclosed pieces of sacred poesy. My best compliments to Mrs. Hamilton and Miss Kennedy.

Yours, &c.

R. B.

[The memory of Burns is warmly cherished by the descendants of the gentleman to whom this letter is addressed. Dr. Hamilton, of Mauchline, I am told, bought at the sale of the furniture of "Auld Nanse Tinnock" the arm-chair in which the Bard was accustomed to sit when he visited her howff, and presented it to the Mason Lodge, where it is now the seat for the grand master.

"Why should not Robin honored be?"—ED.]

No. LXXX.

TO MISS CHALMERS.

Edinburgh, Dec. 1787.

MY DEAR MADAM,

I JUST now have read yours. The poetic compliments I pay cannot be misunderstood. They are neither of them so particular as to point you out to the world at large; and the circle of your acquaintances will allow all I have said. Besides, I have complimented you chiefly, almost solely, on your mental charms. Shall I be plain with you? I will; so look to it. Personal attractions, madam, you have much above par; wit, understanding, and worth, you possess in the first class. This is a cursed flat way of telling you these truths, but let me here no more of your sheepish timidity. I know the world a little. I know what they will say of my poems; by second sight I suppose; for I am seldom out in my conjectures; and you may believe me, my dear madam, I would not run any risk of hurting you by any ill-judged compliment. I wish to show to the world the odds between a poet's friends and those of simple prosemen. More for your information, both the pieces go in. One of them, "Where braving angry winter's storms," is already set—the tune is Neil Gow's Lamentation for *Abercarny*; the other is to be set to an old Highland air in Daniel Dow's collection of ancient Scots music; the name is "*Ha a Chaillich air mo Dheith*." My treacherous memory has forgot every circumstance about *Les Incas*, only I think you mentioned them as being in Creech's possession. I shall ask him about it. I am afraid the song of "Somebody" will come too late—as I shall, for certain, leave town in a week for Ayrshire, and from that to Dumfries, but there my hopes are slender. I leave my direction in town, so any thing, wherever I am, will reach me.

I saw yours to ———; it is not too severe, nor did he take it amiss. On the contrary, like a whipt spaniel, he talks of being with you in the Christmas days. Mr. ——— has given him the invitation, and he is determined to accept of it. O selfishness! he owes, in his sober moments, that from his own volatility of inclination, the circumstances in which he is situated, and his knowledge of his father's disposition;—the whole affair is chimerical—yet he *will* gratify an idle *penchant* at the enormous, cruel expense, of perhaps ruining the peace of the very woman for whom he professes the generous passion of love! He is a gentleman in his mind and manners—*tant pis!* He is a volatile school-boy—the heir of a man's fortune who well knows the value of two times two!

Perdition seize them and their fortunes, before they should make the amiable, the lovely ———, the derided object of their purse-proud contempt!

I am doubly happy to hear of Mrs. ———'s recovery, because I really thought all was over with her. There are days of pleasure yet awaiting her:

“As I came in by Glenap,
I met with an aged woman;
She bad me cheer up my heart,
For the best o' my days was comin'.”

This day will decide my affairs with Creech. Things are, like myself, not what they ought to be; yet better than what they appear to be.

“Heaven's sovereign saves all beings but himself—
That hideous sight—a naked human heart.”

Farewell! remember me to Charlotte.

R. B.

No. LXXXI.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Edinburgh, January 21, 1788.

AFTER six weeks' confinement, I am beginning to walk across the room. They have been six horrible weeks; anguish and low spirits made me unfit to read, write, or think.

I have a hundred times wished that one could resign life as an officer resigns a commission: for I would not take in any poor, ignorant wretch, by selling out. Lately I was a sixpenny private; and, God knows, a miserable soldier enough; now I march to the campaign, a starving cadet: a little more conspicuously wretched.

I am ashamed of all this; for though I do want bravery for the warfare of life, I could wish, like some other soldiers, to have as much fortitude or cunning as to dissemble or conceal my cowardice.

As soon as I can bear the journey, which will be, I suppose, about the middle of next week, I leave Edinburgh: and soon after I shall pay my grateful duty at Dunlop-House.

R. B.

No. LXXXII.

TO THE SAME.

Edinburgh, February 12, 1788.

SOME things in your late letters hurt me: not that *you say them*, but that *you mistake me*. Religion, my honored Madam, has not only been all my life my chief dependance but my dearest enjoyment. I have, indeed, been the luckless victim of wayward

follies; but, alas! I have ever been "more fool than knave." A mathematician without religion is a probable character; an irreligious poet is a monster.

R. B.

[The freedom with which Burns spoke and commented on religious topics, induced the devout and the serious to look upon him as only something better than an infidel. The error he committed lay in treating such matters with levity: had he inquired calmly, and reasoned without being satirical, he might have done more harm to belief, and had a better name in the world, but he would have been a worse man.—ED.]

No. LXXXIII.

TO THE REV. JOHN SKINNER.

Edinburgh, 14th February, 1788.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

I HAVE been a cripple now near three months, though I am getting vastly better, and have been very much hurried beside, or else I would have wrote you sooner. I must beg your pardon for the epistle you sent me appearing in the Magazine. I had given a copy or two to some of my intimate friends, but did not know of the printing of it till the publication of the Magazine. However, as it does great honor to us both, you will forgive it.

The second volume of the songs I mentioned to you in my last is published to-day. I send you a copy, which I beg you will accept as a mark of the veneration I have long had, and shall ever have, for your character, and of the claim I make to your continued acquaintance. Your songs appear in the third volume, with your name in the index; as I

assure you, Sir, I have heard your "Tullochgorum," particularly among our west-country folks, given to many different names, and most commonly to the immortal author of "The Minstrel," who, indeed, never wrote any thing superior to "Gie's a sang, Montgomery cried." Your brother has promised me your verses to the Marquis of Huntley's reel, which certainly deserve a place in the collection. My kind host, Mr. Cruikshank, of the high school here, and said to be one of the best Latins in this age, begs me to make you his grateful acknowledgments for the entertainment he has got in a Latin publication of yours, that I borrowed for him from your acquaintance and much respected friend in this place, the Reverend Dr. Webster. Mr. Cruikshank maintains that you write the best Latin since Buchanan. I leave Edinburgh to-morrow, but shall return in three weeks. Your song you mentioned in your last, to the tune of "Dumbarton Drums," and the other, which you say was done by a brother by trade of mine, a ploughman, I shall thank you much for a copy of each. I am ever, Reverend Sir, with the most respectful esteem and sincere veneration, yours,

R. B.

[The Poet summoned almost all the bards of Caledonia to aid him in providing words for the Scottish airs which compose Johnson's Musical Museum. Skinner was among the number: he communicated one or two songs, and wrote several letters to his brother poet. In one of the latter he says,—“ The difference between our two tracts of education and ways of life is entirely in your favor, and gives you the preference every manner of way. I know a classical education will not create versifying taste, but it mightily improves and assists it; and though, where both these meet, there may sometimes be ground for approbation, yet where taste appears single, as it were, and neither cramped nor supported by acquisition, I will always sustain the justice of its prior claim to applause. A small portion of taste, this way, I have had almost from childhood, especially in the

old Scottish dialect ; and as it is as old a thing as I remember, my fondness for "Christ's-kirk on the Green," which I had by heart ere I was twelve years of age, and which some years ago I attempted to turn into Latin verse. While I was young I dabbled a good deal in these things : but on getting the black gown I gave it pretty much over, till my daughters grew up, who being all good singers, plagued me for words to some of their favorite tunes, and so extorted these effusions, which have made a public appearance beyond my expectations, and contrary to my intentions, at the same time that I hope there is nothing to be found in them uncharacteristic, or unbecoming the cloth, which I would always wish to see respected."—ED.]

No. LXXXIV.

TO RICHARD BROWN.

Edinburgh, February 15, 1788.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I RECEIVED yours with the greatest pleasure. I shall arrive at Glasgow on Monday evening ; and beg, if possible, you will meet me on Tuesday. I shall wait you Tuesday all day. I shall be found at Davies, Black Bull inn. I am hurried, as if haunted by fifty devils, else I should go to Greenock ; but if you cannot possibly come, write me, if possible, to Glasgow, on Monday ; or direct to me at Mossgiel by Mauchline ; and name a day and place in Ayrshire, within a fortnight from this date, where I may meet you. I only stay a fortnight in Ayrshire and return to Edinburgh. I am ever, my dearest friend, yours,

R. B.

[The letters to Richard Brown, says Professor Walker, written at a period when the Poet was in the full blaze of reputation, showed that he was at no time so dazzled with success as to forget the friends who had anticipated the public by discovering his merit.—ED.]

No. LXXXV.

TO MRS. ROSE, OF KILRAVOCK.

Edinburgh, February 17th, 1788.

MADAM,

YOU are much indebted to some indispensable business I have had on my hands, otherwise my gratitude threatened such a return for your obliging favor as would have tired your patience. It but poorly expresses my feelings to say, that I am sensible of your kindness: it may be said of hearts such as yours is, and such, I hope, mine is, much more justly than Addison applies it,—

“Some souls by instinct to each other turn.”

There was something in my reception at Kilravock so different from the cold, obsequious, dancing-school bow of politeness, that it almost got into my head that friendship had occupied her ground without the intermediate march of acquaintance. I wish I could transcribe, or rather transfuse into language, the glow of my heart when I read your letter. My ready fancy, with colors more mellow than life itself, painted the beautifully wild scenery of Kilravock—the venerable grandeur of the castle—the spreading woods—the winding river, gladly leaving his unsightly, heathy source, and lingering with apparent delight as he passes the fairy walk at the bottom of the garden;—your late distressful anxieties—your present enjoyments—your dear little angel, the pride of your hopes;—my aged friend, venerable in worth and years, whose loyalty and other virtues will strongly entitle her to the support of the Almighty Spirit here, and his peculiar favor in a happier state of existence. You cannot imagine, Madam, how much such feelings delight me; they are my dearest proofs of my own im-

mortality. Should I never revisit the north, as probably I never will, nor again see your hospitable mansion, were I, some twenty years hence, to see your little fellow's name making a proper figure in a newspaper paragraph, my heart would bound with pleasure.

I am assisting a friend in a collection of Scottish songs, set to their proper tunes; every air worth preserving is to be included: among others I have given "Morag," and some few Highland airs which pleased me most, a dress which will be more generally known, though far, far inferior in real merit. As a small mark of my grateful esteem, I beg leave to present you with a copy of the work, as far as it is printed; the Man of Feeling, that first of men, has promised to transmit it by the first opportunity.

I beg to be remembered most respectfully to my venerable friend, and to your little Highland chieftain. When you see the "two fair spirits of the hill," at Kildrummie,* tell them that I have done myself the honor of setting myself down as one of their admirers for at least twenty years to come, consequently they must look upon me as an acquaintance for the same period; but, as the Apostle Paul says, "this I ask of grace, not of debt."

I have the honor to be, Madam, &c.

R. B.

[The Poet was hurried away from Kilravock, the reader will remember, by the impetuous temper of his companion Nicol: of the elegance of the society which he forsook, some idea may be formed from the following letter from the elder Mrs. Rose:—

"Kilravock Castle, 30th November, 1787.

"SIR:—I hope you will do me the justice to believe, that it was no defect in gratitude for your punctual performance of your parting promise, that has made me so long in acknowledging it, but merely the difficulty I had in getting

* Miss Sophia Brodie, of L—, and Miss Rose, of Kilravock.

the Highland songs you wished to have accurately noted ; they are at last enclosed, but how shall I convey along with them those graces they acquired from the melodious voice of one of the fair spirits of the hill of Kildrummie ! These I must leave to your imagination to supply. It has powers sufficient to transport you to her side, to recall her accents, and to make them still vibrate in the ears of memory. To her I am indebted for getting the enclosed notes. 'They are clothed with 'thoughts that breathe, and words that burn.' These, however, being in an unknown tongue to you, you must again have recourse to that same fertile imagination of yours to interpret them, and suppose a lover's description of the beauties of an adored mistress—why did I say unknown ? The language of love is an universal one, that seems to have escaped the confusion of Babel, and to be understood by all nations.

“ I rejoice to find that you were pleased with so many things, persons, and places in your northern tour, because it leads me to hope you may be induced to revisit them again. That the old castle of Kilravock, and its inhabitants, were amongst these, adds to my satisfaction. I am even vain enough to admit your very flattering application of the line of Addison's ; at any rate allow me to believe that 'friendship will maintain the ground she has occupied in both our hearts,' in spite of absence, and that when we do meet, it will be as acquaintance of a score of years' standing ; and on this footing consider me as interested in the future course of your fame, so splendidly commenced. Any communications of the progress of your muse will be received with great gratitude, and the fire of your genius will have power to warm even us, frozen sisters of the north.”—
ED.]

No. LXXXVI.

TO RICHARD BROWN.

Mossgiel, 24th February, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

I CANNOT get the proper direction for my friend in Jamaica, but the following will do :—To Mr. Jo. Hutchinson, at Jo. Brownrigg's Esq., care of Mr. Benjamin Henriquez, merchant, Orange-street, Kingston, I ar-

rived here, at my brother's, only yesterday, after fighting my way through Paisley and Kilmarnock, against those old powerful foes of mine, the devil, the world, and the flesh—so terrible in the fields of dissipation. I have met with few incidents in my life which gave me so much pleasure as meeting you in Glasgow. There is a time of life beyond which we cannot form a tie worth the name of friendship. “O youth! enchanting stage, profusely blest.” Life is a fairy scene: almost all that deserves the name of enjoyment or pleasure is only a charming delusion; and in comes repining age in all the gravity of hoary wisdom, and wretchedly chases away the bewitching phantom. When I think of life, I resolve to keep a strict lookout in the course of economy, for the sake of worldly convenience and independence of mind; to cultivate intimacy with a few of the companions of youth, that they may be the friends of age; never to refuse my liquorish humor a handful of the sweetmeats of life, when they come not too dear; and, for futurity,—

“The present moment is our ain,
The neist we never saw!”

How like you my philosophy? Give my best compliments to Mrs. B., and believe me to be,

My dear Sir,

Yours most truly,

R. B.

[The Poet was now nearly recovered from the disaster of the “maimed limb:” he endured his confinement with the more patience, that it enabled him to carry on the Clarinda correspondence—and write songs for Johnson’s Musical Museum.—ED.]

No. LXXXVII.

TO MR. WILLIAM CRUIKSHANK.

Mauchline, March, 3d, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

APOLOGIES for not writing are frequently like apologies for not singing—the apology better than the song. I have fought my way severely through the savage hospitality of this country, to send every guest drunk to bed if they can.

I executed your commission in Glasgow, and I hope the cocoa came safe. 'Twas the same price and the very same kind as your former parcel, for the gentleman recollected your buying there perfectly well.

I should return my thanks for your hospitality (I leave a blank for the epithet, as I know none can do it justice) to a poor, wayfaring bard, who was spent and almost overpowered fighting with prosaic wickedness in high places; but I am afraid lest you should burn the letter whenever you come to the passage, so I pass over it in silence. I am just returned from visiting Mr. Miller's farm. The friend whom I told you I would take with me was highly pleased with the farm; and as he is, without exception, the most intelligent farmer in the country, he has staggered me a good deal. I have the two plans of life before me; I shall balance them to the best of my judgment, and fix on the most eligible. I have written Miller, and shall wait on him when I come to town, which shall be the beginning or middle of next week: I would be in sooner, but my unlucky knee is rather worse, and I fear for some time will scarcely stand the fatigue of my Excise instructions. I only mention these ideas to you; and, indeed, except Mr. Ainslie, whom I intend writing to to-morrow, I will not write at all to

Edinburgh till I return to it. I would send my compliments to Mr. Nicol, but he would be hurt if he knew I wrote to anybody and not to him: so I shall only beg my best, kindest, kindest compliments to my worthy hostess and the sweet little rose-bud.

So soon as I am settled in the routine of life, either as an excise-officer, or as a farmer, I propose myself great pleasure from a regular correspondence with the only man almost I ever saw who joined the most attentive prudence with the warmest generosity.

I am much interested for the best of men, Mr. Wood; I hope he is in better health and spirits than when I saw him last.

I am ever,

My dearest friend,

Your obliged, humble servant,

R. B.

No. LXXXVIII.

TO ROBERT AINSLIE, Esq.

Mauchline, 3d March, 1788.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I AM just returned from Mr. Miller's farm. My old friend whom I took with me was highly pleased with the bargain, and advised me to accept of it. He is the most intelligent sensible farmer in the country, and his advice has staggered me a good deal. I have the two plans before me: I shall endeavour to balance them to the best of my judgment, and fix on the most eligible. On the whole, if I find Mr. Miller in the same favorable disposition as when I saw him last, I shall in all probability turn farmer.

I have been through sore tribulation and under much buffeting of the wicked one since I came to

this country. Jean I found banished, forlorn, destitute and friendless: I have reconciled her to her fate, and I have reconciled her to her mother.

I shall be in Edinburgh middle of next week. My farming ideas I shall keep private till I see. I got a letter from Clarinda yesterday, and she tells me she has got no letter of mine but one. Tell her that I wrote to her from Glasgow, from Kilmarnock, from Mauchline, and yesterday from Cumnock as I returned from Dumfries. Indeed she is the only person in Edinburgh I have written to till this day. How are your soul and body putting up?—a little like man and wife, I suppose. R. B.

[The “sensible” farmer who accompanied Burns to Dalswinton, and influenced him in taking the farm of Ellisland, was Mr. Tait of Glenconner, to whom the Poet addressed one of the least happy of his epistles. The two plans which he says lay before him were farming and the Excise. The farm of Ellisland was, at the time of the Poet’s leaving it, sadly out of heart. The original vigor of the ground had been extracted from it by a succession of occupants who had neither money to purchase manure, nor knowledge in the science of farming. In the hands of the present proprietor it bears tall and weighty crops, and may be compared with the best farms in the parish.—ED.]

No. LXXXIX.

TO RICHARD BROWN.

Mauchline, 7th March, 1788.

I HAVE been out of the country, my dear friend, and have not had an opportunity of writing till now, when I am afraid you will be gone out of the country too. I have been looking at farms, and, after all, perhaps I may settle in the character of a farmer. I have got so vicious a bent to idleness, and have ever been

so little a man of business, that it will take no ordinary effort to bring my mind properly into the routine : but you will say a “great effort is worthy of you.” I say so myself; and butter up my vanity with all the stimulating compliments I can think of. Men of grave, geometrical minds, the sons of “which was to be demonstrated,” may cry up reason as much as they please ; but I have always found an honest passion, or native instinct, the truest auxiliary in the warfare of this world. Reason almost always comes to me like an unlucky wife to a poor devil of a husband, just in sufficient time to add his reproaches to his other grievances.

I am gratified with your kind inquiries after Jean; as, after all, I may say with Othello—

—————“Excellent wretch!

Perdition catch my soul, but I do love thee!”

I go for Edinburgh on Monday.

Yours,—R. B.

No. XC.

TO MR. MUIR.

Mossgiel, 7th March, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE partly changed my ideas, my dear friend, since I saw you. I took old Glenconner with me to Mr. Miller's farm, and he was so pleased with it, that I have wrote an offer to Mr. Miller, which, if he accepts, I shall sit down a plain farmer, the happiest of lives when a man can live by it. In this case I shall not stay in Edinburgh above a week. I set out on Monday, and would have come by Kilmarnock, but there are several small sums owing me for my first

edition about Galston and Newmills, and I shall set off so early as to despatch my business and reach Glasgow by night. When I return, I shall devote a forenoon or two to make some kind of acknowledgment for all the kindness I owe your friendship. Now that I hope to settle with some credit and comfort at home, there was not any friendship or friendly correspondence that promised me more pleasure than yours ; I hope I will not be disappointed. I trust the spring will renew your shattered frame, and make your friends happy. You and I have often agreed that life is no great blessing on the whole. The close of life, indeed, to a reasoning age, is,

“Dark as was chaos, ere the infant sun
Was roll’d together, or had try’d his beams
Athwart the gloom profound.”

But an honest man has nothing to fear. If we lie down in the grave, the whole man a piece of broken machinery, to moulder with the clods of the valley, be it so ; at least there is an end of pain, care, woes and wants : if that part of us called mind does survive the apparent destruction of the man—away with old-wife prejudices and tales ! Every age and every nation has had a different set of stories ; and as the many are always weak of consequence, they have often, perhaps always, been deceived : a man conscious of having acted an honest part among his fellow-creatures—even granting that he may have been the sport at times of passions and instincts—he goes to a great unknown Being, who could have no other end in giving him existence but to make him happy, who gave him those passions and instincts, and well knows their force.

These, my worthy friend, are my ideas ; and I know they are not far different from yours. It becomes a man of sense to think for himself, particularly

in a case where all men are equally interested, and where, indeed, all men are equally in the dark.

Adieu, my dear Sir ; God send us a cheerful meeting!
R. B.

No. XCI.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Mossgiel, 17th March, 1788.

MADAM,

THE last paragraph in yours of the 30th February affected me most, so I shall begin my answer where you ended your letter. That I am often a sinner with any little wit I have, I do confess ; but I have taxed my recollection to no purpose, to find out when it was employed against you. I hate an ungenerous sarcasm a great deal worse than I do the devil ; at least as Milton describes him ; and though I may be rascally enough to be sometimes guilty of it myself, I cannot endure it in others. You, my honored friend, who cannot appear in any light but you are sure of being respectable—you can afford to pass by an occasion to display your wit, because you may depend for fame on your sense ; or, if you choose to be silent, you know you can rely on the gratitude of many, and the esteem of all ; but, God help us, who are wits or witlings by profession, if we stand not for fame there, we sink unsupported !

I am highly flattered by the news you tell me of Coila. I may say to the fair painter who does me so much honor, as Dr. Beattie says to Ross the poet of his muse Scota, from which, by the by, I took the idea of Coila ('tis a poem of Beattie's in the Scottish dialect, which perhaps you have never seen):—

“Ye shak your head, but o’ my fegs,
Ye’ve set auld Scot a on her legs:
Lang had she lien wi’ beffs and flegs,
Bombaz’d and dizzie,
Her fiddle wanted strings and pegs,
Wae’s me poor hizzie.”

R. B.

[One of the daughters of Mrs. Dunlop, it is here intimated, was painting a sketch from the Coila of “The Vision.” Several eminent artists have embodied various of the scenes in the poetry of Burns. David Allan succeeded in one or two attempts: Stothard hit off three or four happy groups: Burnet wrought in the very spirit of “John Anderson, my jo;” and Wilkie added charms to the song of “Duncan Gray.” The impassioned character of his musings is not easily fixed truly in colors.—ED.]

No. XCII.

TO MISS CHALMERS.

Edinburgh, March 14, 1788.

I KNOW, my ever dear friend, that you will be pleased with the news when I tell you, I have at last taken a lease of a farm. Yesternight I completed a bargain with Mr. Miller, of Dalswinton, for the farm of Ellisland, on the banks of the Nith, between five and six miles above Dumfries. I begin at Whit-Sunday to build a house, drive lime, &c.; and heaven be my help! for it will take a strong effort to bring my mind into the routine of business. I have discharged all the army of my former pursuits, fancies, and pleasures; a motley host! and have literally and strictly retained only the ideas of a few friends, which I have incorporated into a life-guard. I trust in Dr. Johnson’s observation, “Where much is attempted, something is done.” Firmness both in sufferance and ex-

ertion, is a character I would wish to be thought to possess : and have always despised the whining yelp of complaint, and the cowardly, feeble resolve.

Poor Miss K. is ailing a good deal this winter, and begged me to remember her to you the first time I wrote to you. Surely woman, amiable woman, is often made in vain. Too delicately formed for the rougher pursuits of ambition ; too noble for the dirt of avarice, and even too gentle for the rage of pleasure ; formed indeed for, and highly susceptible of enjoyment and rapture ; but that enjoyment, alas ! almost wholly at the mercy of the caprice, malevolence, stupidity, or wickedness of an animal at all times comparatively unfeeling, and often brutal.

R. B.

[In building his farm-house the Poet had to perform the part of superintendent of the works ; to dig the foundations, collect the stones, seek the sand, cart the lime, and see that all was performed according to the specifications : these were the uncouth cares of which he afterwards complained.—ED.]

No. XCIII.

TO RICHARD BROWN.

Glasgow, 26th March, 1788.

I AM monstrously to blame, my dear Sir, in not writing to you, and sending you the Directory. I have been getting my tack extended, as I have taken a farm ; and I have been racking shop accounts with Mr. Creech, both of which, together with watching, fatigue, and a load of care almost too heavy for my shoulders, have in some degree actually fevered me. I really forgot the Directory yesterday, which vexed me ; but I was convulsed with rage a great part of the

day. I have to thank you for the ingenious, friendly, and elegant epistle from your friend Mr. Crawford. I shall certainly write to him, but not now. This is merely a card to you, as I am posting to Dumfries-shire, where many perplexing arrangements await me. I am vexed about the Directory; but, my dear Sir, forgive me: these eight days I have been positively crazed. My compliments to Mrs. B. I shall write to you at Grenada.—I am ever, my dearest friend,

Yours,—R. B.

[The excitement to which Burns alludes was occasioned by the dilatory movements of Creech in settling accounts between him and the Poet. The baillie parted with his money as a lover with his mistress—

“With slow, reluctant, amorous delay.”—ED.]

No. XCIV.

TO MR. ROBERT CLEGHORN.

Mauchline, 31st March, 1788.

YESTERDAY, my dear Sir, as I was riding through a track of melancholy, joyless muirs, between Galloway and Ayrshire, it being Sunday, I turned my thoughts to psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; and your favorite air, “Captain O’Kean,” coming at length into my head, I tried these words to it. You will see that the first part of the tune must be repeated.

I am tolerably pleased with these verses, but as I have only a sketch of the tune, I leave it with you to try if they suit the measure of the music.

I am so harrassed with care and anxiety, about this farming project of mine, that my muse has degenerated into the veriest prose-wench that ever picked cinders, or followed a tinker. When I am fairly got

into the routine of business, I shall trouble you with a longer epistle ; perhaps with some queries respecting farming ; at present, the world sits such a load on my mind, that it has effaced almost every trace of the poet in me.

My very best compliments and good wishes to Mrs. Cleghorn.

R. B.

[Cleghorn had no little skill in musical composition : he was, besides, something of a farmer, and a pleasant and social man. Respecting the poetical portion of the letter, he said, " The words delight me much—they fit the tune to a hair : I wish you would send me a verse or two more ; and, if you have no objection, I would have it in the jacobite style. Suppose it should be sung after the fatal field of Culloden, by the unfortunate Charles." Regarding the farming queries, Cleghorn also made response :—" Any skill I have in country business you may truly command. Situation, soil, customs of countries, may vary from each other ; but Farmer Attention is a good farmer in every place." The Poet complied with his friend's request, and wrote " The Chevalier's Lament : " he was not more than pleased about the agricultural saw—it was easier for him to write a fine song, than act the part of " Farmer Attention."—ED.]

No. XCV.

TO MISS CHALMERS.

Mauchline, 7th April, 1788.

I AM indebted to you and Miss Nimmo for letting me know Miss Kennedy. Strange ! how apt we are to indulge prejudices in our judgments of one another ! Even I, who pique myself on my skill in marking characters—because I am too proud of my character as a man, to be dazzled in my judgment for glaring wealth ; and too proud of my situation as a poor man to be biassed against squalid poverty—I was unacquainted with Miss K.'s very uncommon worth.

I am going on a good deal progressive in *mon grand but*, the sober science of life. I have lately made some sacrifices, for which, where I *vivâ voce* with you to paint the situation and recount the circumstances, you would applaud me.

R. B.

[The sacrifices to which the Poet alludes were honorable to his heart: he determined—in spite of the frowns of some, and the smiles of others—to unite his fortunes with those of Jean Armour.—ED.]

No. XCVI.

TO THE SAME.

No date.

Now for that wayward, unfortunate thing, myself. I have broke measures with Creech, and last week I wrote him a frosty, keen letter. He replied in terms of chastisement, and promised me upon his honor that I should have the account on Monday; but this is Tuesday, and yet I have not heard a word from him. God have mercy on me! a poor d-mned, incautious, duped, unfortunate fool! The sport, the miserable victim of rebellious pride, hypochondriac imagination, agonizing sensibility, and bedlam passions!

“I wish that I were dead, but I’m no like to die!” I had lately “a hairbreadth ’scape in th’ imminent deadly breach” of love too. Thank my stars I got off heart-whole, “waur fleyd than hurt.”—Interruption.

I have this moment got a hint: I fear I am something like—undone—but I hope for the best. Come, stubborn pride and unshrinking resolution; accompany me through this, to me, miserable world! You must not desert me! Your friendship I think I can count on, though I should date my letters from a

marching regiment. Early in life, and all my life, I reckoned on a recruiting drum as my forlorn hope. Seriously though, life at present presents me with but a melancholy path: but—my limb will soon be sound, and I shall struggle on.

R. B.

No. XCVII.

TO THE SAME.

Edinburgh, Sunday.

TO-MORROW, my dear madam, I leave Edinburgh. I have altered all my plans of future life. A farm that I could live in, I could not find; and, indeed, after the necessary support my brother and the rest of the family required, I could not venture on farming in that style suitable to my feelings. You will condemn me for the next step I have taken. I have entered into the Excise. I stay in the west about three weeks, and then return to Edinburgh for six weeks' instructions; afterwards, for I get employ instantly, I go *où il plait à Dieu,—et mon Roi*. I have chosen this, my dear friend, after mature deliberation. The question is not at what door of fortune's palace shall we enter in; but what doors does she open to us? I was not likely to get any thing to do. I wanted *un bûc*, which is a dangerous, an unhappy situation. I got this without any hanging on, or mortifying solicitation; it is immediate bread, and though poor in comparison of the last eighteen months of my existence, 'tis luxury in comparison of all my preceding life: besides, the commissioners are some of them my acquaintances, and all of them my firm friends.

R. B.

No. XCVIII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Mauchline, 28th April, 1788.

MADAM,

YOUR powers of reprehension must be great indeed, as I assure you they made my heart ache with penitential pangs, even though I was really not guilty. As I commence farmer at Whit-Sunday, you will easily guess I must be pretty busy; but that is not all. As I got the offer of the Excise business without solicitation, and as it costs me only six weeks' attendance for instructions, to entitle me to a commission—which commission lies by me, and at any future period, on my simple petition, can be resumed—I thought five-and-thirty pounds a-year was no bad *dernier ressort* for a poor poet, if fortune in her jade tricks should kick him down from the little eminence to which she has lately helped him up.

For this reason, I am at present attending these instructions, to have them completed before Whit-Sunday. Still, Madam, I prepared with the sincerest pleasure to meet you at the Mount, and came to my brother's on Saturday night, to set out on Sunday; but for some nights preceeding I had slept in an apartment, where the force of the winds and rains was only mitigated by being sifted through numberless apertures in the windows, walls, &c. In consequence I was on Sunday, Monday, and part of Tuesday, unable to stir out of bed, with all the miserable effects of a violent cold.

You see, Madam, the truth of the French maxim, *le vrai n'est pas toujours le vraisemblable*; your last was so full of expostulation, and was something so like the language of an offended friend, that I

began to tremble for a correspondence, which I had with grateful pleasure set down as one of the greatest enjoyments of my future life.

Your books have delighted me: Virgil, Dryden, and Tasso were all equally strangers to me; but of this more at large in my next.

R. B.

[The Tasso with which Mrs. Dunlop indulged the Poet was the translation of Hoole; a work, in spite of the commendation of Johnson, as inferior in beauty to the version of Fairfax, as a beggar's pike staff is to a pear-tree in full blossom.—ED.]

No. XCIX.

TO MR. JAMES SMITH,

AVON PRINTFIELD, LINLITHGOW.

Mauchline, April 28, 1788.

BEWARE of your Strasburgh, my good Sir! Look on this as the opening of a correspondence, like the opening of a twenty-four gun battery!

There is no understanding a man properly, without knowing something of his previous ideas (that is to say, if the man has any ideas;) for I know many who, in the animal-muster, pass for men that are the scanty masters of only one idea on any given subject, and by far the greatest part of your acquaintances and mine can barely boast of ideas, 1·25—1·5—1·75 (or some such fractional matter); so to let you a little into the secrets of my pericranium, there is, you must know, a certain clean-limbed, handsome, bewitching young hussy of your acquaintance, to whom I have lately and privately given a matrimonial title to my corpus.

“Bode a robe and wear it,
Bode a pock and bear it,”

says the wise old Scots adage! I hate to presage ill-luck; and as my girl has been doubly kinder to me than even the best of women usually are to their partners of our sex, in similar circumstances, I reckon on twelve times a brace of children against I celebrate my twelfth wedding-day: these twenty-four will give me twenty-four gossipings, twenty-four christenings (I mean one equal to two), and I hope, by the blessing of the God of my fathers, to make them twenty-four dutiful children to their parents, twenty-four useful members of society, and twenty-four approved servants of their God! * * *

"Light's heartsome," quo' the wife when she was stealing sheep. You see what a lamp I have hung up to lighten your paths, when you are idle enough to explore the combinations and relations of my ideas. 'Tis now as plain as a pike staff, why a twenty-four gun battery was a metaphor I could readily employ.

Now for business.—I intend to present Mrs. Burns with a printed shawl, an article of which I dare say you have variety: 'tis my first present to her since I have irrevocably called her mine, and I have a kind of whimsical wish to get her the first said present from an old and much valued friend of hers and mine, a trusty Trojan, on whose friendship I count myself possessed of as a life-rent lease.

Look on this letter as a "beginning of sorrows;" I will write you till your eyes ache reading nonsense.

Mrs. Burns ('tis only her private designation) beg her best compliments to you.

R. B.

No. C.

TO PROFESSOR DUGALD STEWART.

Mauchline, 3d May, 1788.

SIR,

I ENCLOSE you one or two more of my bagatelles. If the fervent wishes of honest gratitude have any influence with that great, unknown Being who frames the chain of causes and events, prosperity and happiness will attend your visit to the continent, and return you safe to your native shore.

Wherever I am, allow me, Sir, to claim it as my privilege to acquaint you with my progress in my trade of rhymes; as I am sure I could say it with truth, that, next to my little fame, and the having it in my power to make life more comfortable to those whom nature has made dear to me, I shall ever regard your countenance, your patronage, your friendly good offices, as the most valued consequence of my late success in life.

R. B.

[Of the accomplished Dugald Stewart, little that is new can be related—the kindness of his heart and amenity of his manners were as conspicuous as his talents. The account of Burns, which he rendered to Currie, will always be read with interest—he is speaking of the Poet's appearance in Edinburgh:—

“ His manners were then as they continued ever afterwards, simple, manly, and independent; strongly expressive of conscious genius and worth; but without any thing that indicated forwardness, arrogance, or vanity. He took his share in conversation, but not more than belonged to him, and listened with apparent attention and deference on subjects where his want of education deprived him of the means of information. If there had been a little more of gentleness and accommodation in his temper he would, I think, have been still more interesting; but he had been accustomed to give law in the circle of his ordinary acquaintance, and his dread of any thing approaching to meanness or servility, rendered his manner somewhat decided and hard. Nothing, perhaps, was more remarkable among his va-

rious attainments, than the fluency, and precision, and originality of his language, when he spoke in company ; more particularly as as he aimed at purity in his turn of expression, and avoided, more successfully than most Scotchmen, the peculiarities of Scottish phraseology.

“ He came to Edinburgh early in the winter following, and remained there for several months. By whose advice he took this step, I am unable to say. Perhaps it was suggested only by his own curiosity to see a little more of the world ; but, I confess, I dreaded the consequences from the first, and always wished that his pursuits and habits should continue the same as in the former part of his life ; with the addition of, what I considered as then completely within his reach, a good farm on moderate terms, in a part of the country agreeable to his taste.

“ The attentions he received during his stay in town from all ranks and descriptions of persons, were such as would have turned any head but his own. I cannot say that I could perceive any unfavorable effect which they left on his mind. He retained the same simplicity of manners and appearance which had struck me so forcibly when I first saw him in the country ; nor did he seem to feel any additional self-importance from the number and rank of his new acquaintance. His dress was perfectly suited to his station—plain and unpretending, with a sufficient attention to neatness. If I recollect right, he always wore boots ; and, when on more than usual ceremony, buckskin breeches.

“ The variety of his engagements, while in Edinburgh, prevented me from seeing him so often as I could have wished. In the course of the spring, he called on me once or twice, at my request, early in the morning, and walked with me to Braid-Hills, in the neighbourhood of the town, when he charmed me still more by his private conversation than he had ever done in company. He was passionately fond of the beauties of nature ; and I recollect once he told me, when I was admiring a distant prospect in one of our morning walks, that the sight of so many smoking cottages gave a pleasure to his mind, which none could understand who had not witnessed, like himself, the happiness and the worth which they contained.

“ In his political principles he was then a jacobite ; which was perhaps owing partly to this, that his father was originally from the estate of Lord Mareschall. Indeed he did not appear to have thought much on such subjects, nor very consistently. He had a very strong sense of religion, and expressed deep regret at the levity with which he had heard it treated occasionally in

some convivial meetings which he frequented. I speak of him as he was in the winter of 1786-7; for afterwards we met but seldom, and our conversations turned chiefly on his literary projects, or his private affairs."—ED.]

No. CI.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Mauchline, 4th May, 1788.

MADAM,

DRYDEN'S Virgil has delighted me. I do not know whether the critics will agree with me, but the Georgics are to me by far the best of Virgil. It is indeed a species of writing entirely new to me; and has filled my head with a thousand fancies of emulation: but, alas! when I read the Georgics, and then survey my own powers, 'tis like the idea of a Shetland pony, drawn up by the side of a thorough-bred hunter, to start for the plate. I own I am disappointed in the Æneid. Faultless correctness may please, and does highly please, the lettered critic: but to that awful character I have not the most distant pretensions. I do not know whether I do not hazard my pretensions to be a critic of any kind, when I say that I think Virgil, in many instances a servile copier of Homer. If I had the Odyssey by me, I could parallel many passages where Virgil has evidently copied, but by no means improved, Homer. Nor can I think there is any thing of this owing to the translators; for, from every thing I have seen of Dryden, I think him, in genius and fluency of language, Pope's master. I have not perused Tasso enough to form an opinion: in some future letter, you shall have my ideas of him; though I am conscious my criticisms must be very inaccurate and imperfect, as there I have ever felt and lamented my want of learning most.

R. B.

[A national poem was long present to the fancy of Burns : but he seems to have hesitated between the stately versification of the English muse and the homely strains of Coila—death prevented him from deciding. It would not appear that Burns, though he loved “The Task” so much that he carried it in his pocket, had extended his reading to Cowper’s Translation of Homer. The graphic beauty and natural force of that fine version would not have been lost on a lover of clear images and nervous manly language.—ED.]

No. CII.

TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE.

Mauchline, May 26, 1788.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I AM two kind letters in your debt, but I have been from home, and horridly busy, buying and preparing for my farming business, over and above the plague of my Excise instructions, which this week will finish.

As I flatter my wishes that I foresee many future years’ correspondence between us, ’tis foolish to talk of excusing dull epistles ; a dull letter may be a very kind one. I have the pleasure to tell you that I have been extremely fortunate in all my buyings and bargainings hitherto ; Mrs. Burns not excepted ; which title I now avow to the world. I am truly pleased with this last affair : it has indeed added to my anxieties for futurity, but it has given a stability to my mind and resolutions unknown before ; and the poor girl has the most sacred enthusiasm of attachment to me, and has not a wish but to gratify my every idea of her deportment. I am interrupted.—Farewell ! my dear Sir.

R. B.

No. CIII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

27th May, 1788.

MADAM,

I HAVE been torturing my philosophy to no purpose, to account for that kind partiality of yours, which has followed me, in my return to the shade of life, with assiduous benevolence. Often did I regret, in the fleeting hours of my late will-o'-wisp appearance, that "here I had no continuing city;" and, but for the consolation of a few solid guineas, could almost lament the time that a momentary acquaintance with wealth and splendor put me so much out of conceit with the sworn companions of my road through life—insignificance and poverty.

There are few circumstances relating to the unequal distribution of the good things of this life that give me more vexation (I mean in what I see around me) than the importance the opulent bestow on their trifling family affairs, compared with the very same things on the contracted scale of a cottage. Last afternoon I had the honor to spend an hour or two at a good woman's fire-side, where the planks that composed the floor were decorated with a splendid carpet, and the gay table sparkled with silver and china. 'Tis now about term-day, and there has been a revolution among those creatures, who though in appearance partakers, and equally noble partakers, of the same nature with Madame, are from time to time—their nerves, their sinews, their health, strength, wisdom, experience, genius, time, nay a good part of their very thoughts—sold for months and years, not only to the necessities, the conveniences, but the caprices of the important few. We talked of the insignificant creatures; nay, notwithstanding their general stupid-

ity and rascality, did some of the poor devils the honor to commend them. But light be the turf upon his breast who taught, "Reverence thyself!" We looked down on the unpolished wretches, their impertinent wives and clouterly brats, as the lordly bull does on the little dirty ant-hill, whose puny inhabitants he crushes in the carelessness of his ramble, or tosses in the air in the wantonness of his pride.

R. B.

[The hiring-season naturally introduced the conversation to which the Poet indignantly alludes. In Scotland, servants are hired half-yearly from term to term, or, in other words, from Whit-Sunday to Martinmas, and from Martinmas to Whit-Sunday. In England, servants are engaged by the month, and are more at the mercy of the changeable and the capricious.—ED.]

No. CIV.

TO THE SAME.

AT MR. DUNLOP'S, HADDINGTON.

Ellisland, 13th June, 1788.

"Where'er I roam, whatever realms I see,
My heart, untravell'd, fondly turns to thee;
Still to my friend it turns with ceaseless pain,
And drags, at each remove, a lengthen'd chain."

GOLDSMITH.

THIS is the second day, my honored friend, that I have been on my farm. A solitary inmate of an old, smoky spence; far from every object I love, or by whom I am beloved; nor any acquaintance older than yesterday, except Jenny Geddes, the old mare I ride on; while uncouth cares and novel plans hourly insult my awkward ignorance and bashful inexperience. There is a foggy atmosphere native to my soul in the

hour of care; consequently the dreary objects seem larger than the life. Extreme sensibility, irritated and prejudiced on the gloomy side by a series of misfortunes and disappointments, at that period of my existence when the soul is laying in her cargo of ideas for the voyage of life is, I believe, the principal cause of this unhappy frame of mind

“The valiant, in himself, what can he suffer?
Or what need he regard his *single* woes?” &c.

Your surmise, Madam, is just; I am indeed a husband.

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To jealousy or infidelity I am an equal stranger. My perservative from the first is the most thorough consciousness of her sentiments of honor, and her attachment to me; my antidote against the last is my long and deep-rooted affection for her.

In housewife matters, of aptness to learn and activity to execute, she is eminently mistress: and during my absence in Nithsdale, she is regularly and constantly apprentice to my mother and sisters in their dairy and other rural business.

The muses must not be offended when I tell them, the concerns of my wife and family will, in my mind, always take the *pas*; but I assure them their ladyships will ever come next in place.

You are right that a bachelor state would have ensured me more friends; but, from a cause you will easily guess, conscious peace in the enjoyment of my own mind, and unmistrusting confidence in approaching my God, would seldom have been of the number.

I found a once much-loved and still much-loved female, literally and truly cast out to the mercy of the naked elements; but I enabled her to *purchase* a shelter;—there is no sporting with a fellow-creature's happiness or misery.

The most placid good-nature and sweetness of disposition ; a warm heart, gratefully devoted with all its powers to love me ; vigorous health and sprightly cheerfulness, set off to the best advantage by a more than commonly handsome figure ; these, I think, in a woman, may make a good wife, though she should never have read a page but the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, nor have danced in a brighter assembly than a penny pay-wedding.

R. B.

[It was one of the pleasing theories of the Poet, in the pursuit of independence, that while he watched the public revenue as a guager, his wife would superintend the whole system of in-door and out-door economy of a farmer's establishment, and that between them money would come pouring in. To insure this, he began a war against the nature of the soil of Ellisland, by trying to turn it into pasturage : and he caused his wife to be instructed in the business of the dairy, with the hope of making cheese rivalling the far-famed Dunlop ; but

“ The best laid schemes of mice and men
Gang aft agley.”—ED.]

No. CV.

TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE.

Ellisland, June 14, 1788.

THIS is now the third day, my dearest Sir, that I have sojourned in these regions ; and during these three days you have occupied more of my thoughts than in three weeks preceding : in Ayrshire I have several variations of friendship's compass, here it points invariably to the pole. My farm gives me a good many uncouth cares and anxieties, but I hate the language of complaint. Job, or some one of his friends, says well—“ Why should a living man complain ?”

I have lately been much mortified with contem-

plating an unlucky imperfection in the very framing and construction of my soul; namely, a blundering inaccuracy of her olfactory organs in hitting the scent of craft or design in my fellow-creatures. I do not mean any compliment to my ingenuousness, or to hint that the defect is in consequence of the unsuspecting simplicity of conscious truth and honor; I take it to be, in some way or other, an imperfection in the mental sight; or, metaphor apart, some modification of dullness. In two or three small instances lately, I have been most shamefully out.

I have all along, hitherto, in the warfare of life, been bred to arms among the light-horse—the piquet-guards of fancy; a kind of hussars and Highlanders of the brain; but I am firmly resolved to sell out of these giddy battalions, who have no ideas of a battle but fighting the foe, or of a siege but storming the town. Cost what it will, I am determined to buy in among the grave squadrons of heavy-armed thought, or the artillery corps of plodding contrivance.

What books are you reading, or what is the subject of your thoughts, besides the great studies of your profession? You said something about religion in your last. I don't exactly remember what it was, as the letter is in Ayrshire; but I thought it not only prettily said, but nobly thought. You will make a noble fellow if once you were married. I make no reservation of your being well-married: you have so much sense, and knowledge of human nature, that though you may not realize perhaps the ideas of romance, yet you will never be ill-married.

Were it not for the terrors of my ticklish situation respecting provision for a family of children, I am decidedly of opinion that the step I have taken is vastly for my happiness. As it is, I look to the Excise scheme as a certainty of maintenance; a maintenance!—luxury to what either Mrs. Burns or I were born to.

Adieu.—R. B.

No. CVI.

TO ROBERT AINSLIE, Esq.

Mauchline, 23rd June, 1788.

THIS letter, my dear Sir, is only a business scrap. Mr. Miers, profile painter in your town, has executed a profile of Dr. Blacklock for me : do me the favor to call for it, and sit to him yourself for me, which put in the same size as the doctor's. The account of both profiles will be fifteen shillings, which I have given to James Connel, our Mauchline carrier, to pay you when you give him the parcel. You must not, my friend, refuse to sit. The time is short ; when I sat to Mr. Miers, I am sure he did not exceed two minutes. I propose hanging Lord Glencairn, the Doctor, and you in trio over my new chimney-piece that is to be.

Adieu.—R. B.

[The kindness of Mr. Field, profilist, Strand, has not only indulged me with a look at the original outline of the Poet's face, but he has put me in possession of a capital copy. It is the size of life : the contour is fine—nay, noble : the nose is a little blunt at the point : the mouth is full and well-shaped, the forehead high, and the whole air that of freedom and genius. It is one of thirty thousand likenesses taken by the same skilful hand.—ED.]

No. CVII.

TO THE SAME.

Ellisland, June, 30th, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

I JUST now received your brief epistle ; and, to take vengeance on your laziness, I have, you see, taken a

long sheet of writing-paper, and have begun at the top of the page, intending to scribble on to the very last corner.

I am vexed at that affair of the * * *, but dare not enlarge on the subject until you send me your direction, as I suppose that will be altered on your late master and friend's death. I am concerned for the old fellow's exit, only as I fear it may be to your disadvantage in any respect—for an old man's dying, except he have been a very benevolent character, or in some particular situation of life that the welfare of the poor or the helpless depended on him, I think it an event of the most trifling moment to the world. Man is naturally a kind, benevolent animal, but he is dropped into such a needy situation here in this vexatious world, and has such a whoreson, hungry, growling, multiplying pack of necessities, appetites, passions, and desires about him, ready to devour him for want of other food; that in fact he must lay aside his cares for others that he may look properly to himself. You have been imposed upon in paying Mr. Miers for the profile of a Mr. H. I did not mention it in my letter to you, nor did I ever give Mr. Miers any such order. I have no objection to lose the money, but I will not have any such profile in my possession.

I desired the carrier to pay you, but as I mentioned only 15s. to him, I will rather enclose you a guinea note. I have it not, indeed, to spare here, as I am only a sojourner in a strange land in this place; but in a day or two I return to Mauchline, and there I have the bank-notes through the house like salt permits.

There is a great degree of folly in talking unnecessarily of one's private affairs. I have just now been interrupted by one of my new neighbours, who has made himself absolutely contemptible in my eyes, by his silly, garrulous pruriency. I know it has been a fault of my own, too; but from this moment I abjure

it as I would the service of hell ! Your poets, spend-thrifts, and other fools of that kidney, pretend, forsooth, to crack their jokes on prudence ; but 'tis a squalid vagabond glorying in his rags. Still imprudence respecting money matters is much more pardonable than imprudence respecting character. I have no objection to prefer prodigality to avarice, in some few instances ; but I appeal to your observation, if you have not met and often met, with the same disingenuousness, the same hollow-hearted insincerity, and disintegrative depravity of principle, in the hackneyed victims of profusion, as in the unfeeling children of parsimony. I have every possible reverence for the much talked-of world beyond the grave, and I wish that which piety believes, and virtue deserves, may be all matter of fact. But in things belonging to, and terminating in this present scene of existence, man has serious and interesting business on hand. Whether a man shall shake hands with welcome in the distinguished elevation of respect, or shrink from contempt in the abject corner of insignificance ; whether he shall wanton under the tropic of plenty, at least enjoy himself in the comfortable latitudes of easy convenience, or starve in the arctic circle of dreary poverty ; whether he shall rise in the manly consciousness of a self-approving mind, or sink beneath the galling load of regret and remorse—these are alternatives of the last moment.

You see how I preach. You used occasionally to sermonize too ; I wish you would, in charity, favor me with a sheet full in your own way. I admire the close of a letter Lord Bolingbroke writes to Dean Swift :—“ Adieu, dear Swift ! with all thy faults I love thee entirely : make an effort to love me with all mine !” Humble servant, and all that trumpery, is now such a prostituted business, that honest friendship, in her sincere way, must have recourse to her primitive, simple,—farewell !

R. B.

No. CVIII.

TO MR. GEORGE LOCKHART,

MERCHANT, GLASGOW.

Mauchline, 18th July, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

I AM just going for Nithsdale, else I would certainly have transcribed some of my rhyming things for you. The Miss Baillies I have seen in Edinburgh. "Fair and lovely are thy works, Lord God Almighty! Who would not praise thee for these thy gifts in thy goodness to the sons of men!" It needed not your fine taste to admire them. I declare, one day I had the honor of dining at Mr. Baillies, I was almost in the predicament of the children of Israel when they could not look on Moses' face for the glory that shone in it when he descended from Mount Sinai.

I did once write a poetic address from the Falls of Bruar to his Grace of Athole, when I was in the Highlands. When you return to Scotland, let me know, and I will send such of my pieces as please myself best. I return to Mauchline in about ten days.

My compliments to Mr. Purden. I am in truth, but at present in haste,

Yours,—R. B.

No. CIX.

TO MR. PETER HILL.

MY DEAR HILL,

I SHALL say nothing to your mad present—you have so long and often been of important service to me, and I suppose you mean to go on conferring obligations until I shall not be able to lift up my face before you. In the mean time, as Sir Roger de Coverley, because it

happened to be a cold day in which he made his will, ordered his servants great coats for mourning, so because I have been this week plagued with an indigestion, I have sent you by the carrier a fine old ewe-milk cheese.

Indigestion is the devil: nay, 'tis the devil and all. It besets a man in every one of his senses. I lose my appetite at the sight of successful knavery, and sicken to loathing at the noise and nonsense of self-important folly. When the hollow-hearted wretch takes me by the hand, the feeling spoils my dinner; the proud man's wine so offends my palate that it chokes me in the gullet; and the *pulvilised*, feathered, pert coxcomb is so disgusting in my nostril that my stomach turns.

If ever you have any of these disagreeable sensations, let me prescribe for you patience and a bit of my cheese. I know that you are no niggard of your good things among your friends, and some of them are in much need of a slice. There, in my eye, is our friend Smellie; a man positively of the first abilities and greatest strength of mind, as well as one of the best hearts and keenest wits that I have ever met with; when you see him, as, alas! he too is smarting at the pinch of distressful circumstances, aggravated by the sneer of contumelious greatness—a bit of my cheese alone will not cure him, but if you add a tankard of brown stout, and superadd a magnum of right Oporto, you will see his sorrows vanish like the morning mist before the summer sun.

Candlish, the earliest friend, except my only brother, that I have on earth, and one of the worthiest fellows that ever any man called by the name of friend, if a luncheon of my cheese would help to rid him of some of his superabundant modesty, you would do well to give it him.

David,* with his *Courant*, comes, too, across my recollection, and I beg you will help him largely from the said ewe-milk cheese, to enable him to digest those bedaubing paragraphs with which he is eternally larding the lean characters of certain great men in a certain great town. I grant you the periods are very well turned; so, a fresh egg is a very good thing, but when thrown at a man in a pillory, it does not at all improve his figure, not to mention the irreparable loss of the egg.

My facetious friend Dunbar I would wish also to be a partaker; not to digest his spleen, for that he laughs off, but to digest his last night's wine at the last field-day of the Crochallan corps.†

Among our common friends I must not forget one of the dearest of them—Cunningham. The brutality, insolence, and selfishness of a world unworthy of having such a fellow as he is in it, I know sticks in his stomach, and if you can help him to any thing that will make him a little easier on that score, it will be very obliging.

As to honest J——— S———e, he is such a contented, happy man, that I know not what can annoy him, except, perhaps, he may not have got the better of a parcel of modest anecdotes which a certain poet gave him one night at supper, the last time the said poet was in town.

Though I have mentioned so many men of law, I shall have nothing to do with them professedly—the faculty are beyond my prescription. As to their clients, that is another thing; God knows they have much to digest!

The clergy I pass by; their profundity of erudition, and their liberality of sentiment; their total want of

* Printer of the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*.

† A club of choice spirits.

pride, and their detestation of hypocrisy, are so proverbially notorious as to place them far, far above either my praise or censure.

I was going to mention a man of worth, whom I have the honor to call friend, the Laird of Craigdarroch ; but I have spoken to the landlord of the King's-Arms inn here, to have at the next country meeting a large ewe-milk cheese on the table, for the benefit of the Dumfries-shire Whigs, to enable to digest the Duke of Queensberry's late political conduct.

I have just this moment an opportunity of a private hand to Edinburgh, as perhaps you would not digest double postage.

R. B.

[Peter Hill was a bookseller, and the present to which the Poet alludes, was some valuable books. Burns felt unwilling to lie under obligations : and hence his return in " a fine old ewe-milk cheese," a savory morsel that no doubt smacked of the ewe-bughts.—ED.]

No. CX.

TO ROBERT GRAHAM, Esq.,

OF FINTRAY.

SIR,

WHEN I had the honor of being introduced to you at Athole-house, I did not think so soon of asking a favor of you. When Lear, in Shakspeare, asked Old Kent, why he wished to be in his service, he answers, " Because you have that in your face which I would fain call master. For some such reason, Sir, do I now solicit your patronage. You know, I dare say, of an application I lately made to your Board to be admitted an officer of Excise. I have, according to form, been examined by a supervisor, and to-day I gave in his

certificate, with a request for an order for instructions. In this affair, if I succeed, I am afraid I shall but too much need a patronizing friend. Propriety of conduct as a man, and fidelity and attention as an officer, I dare engage for; but with any thing like business, except manual labor, I am totally unacquainted.

I had intended to have closed my late appearance on the stage of life, in the character of a country farmer; but after discharging some filial and fraternal claims, I find I could only fight for existence in that miserable manner, which I have lived to see throw a venerable parent into the jaws of a jail; whence death, the poor man's last and often best friend, rescued him.

I know, Sir, that to need your goodness, is to have a claim on it; may I, therefore, beg your patronage to forward me in this affair, till I be appointed to a division; where, by the help of rigid economy, I will try to support that independence so dear to my soul, but which has been too often so distant from my situation.

R. B.

[The filial and fraternal claims to which this letter refers were as follows. Two hundred pounds lent to his brother Gilbert, to enable him to fight out the remainder of the lease of Mossgiel—and a considerable sum given to his mother for her own contingencies. Burns was ever a dutiful son and a kind brother.—
ED.]

No. CXI.

TO WILLIAM CRUIKSHANK.

Ellisland, August, 1788.

I HAVE not room, my dear friend, to answer all the particulars of your last kind letter. I shall be in Edinburgh on some business very soon; and as I shall

be two days, or perhaps three, in town, we shall discuss matters *vivâ voce*. My knee, I believe, will never be entirely well; and an unlucky fall this winter has made it still worse. I well remember the circumstance you allude to, respecting Creech's opinion of Mr. Nicol; but as the first gentleman owes me still about fifty pounds, I dare not meddle in the affair.

It gave me a very heavy heart to read such accounts of the consequence of your quarrel with that puritanic, rotten-hearted, hell-commissioned scoundrel, A——. If, notwithstanding your unprecedented industry in public, and your irreproachable conduct in private life, he still has you so much in his power, what ruin may he not bring on some others I could name?

Many and happy returns of seasons to you, with your dearest and worthiest friend, and the lovely little pledge of your happy union. May the great Author of life, and of every enjoyment that can render life delightful, make her that comfortable blessing to you both, which you so ardently wish for, and which, allow me to say, you so well deserve! Glance over the foregoing verses, and let me have your blots.

Adieu.

R. B.

[The verses inclosed were the lines written on Friars'-Carse Hermitage: "The first fruits," says the Poet elsewhere, "of my intercourse with the Nithsdale Muse." Some of his best poems were written on the Banks of the Nith; viz. the "Lines on Friars'-Carse Hermitage:" the verses "On Captain Grose's Peregrinations: "The Whistle:" the "Elegy on Captain Matthew Henderson," and "Tam o' Shanter," with many exquisite songs. The walk in which the Poet loved to muse is still shown and revered at Ellisland.—ED.]

No. CXII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Mauchline, August 2, 1788.

HONORED MADAM,

YOUR kind letter welcomed me, yesternight, to Ayrshire. I am, indeed, seriously angry with you at the quantum of your luckpenny; but, vexed and hurt as I was, I could not help laughing very heartily at the noble lord's apology for the missed napkin.

I would write you from Nithsdale, and given you my direction there, but I have scarce an opportunity of calling at a post-office once in a fortnight. I am six miles from Dumfries, am scarcely ever in it myself, and, as yet, have little acquaintance in the neighbourhood. Besides, I am now very busy on my farm, building a dwelling-house; as at present I am almost an evangelical man in Nithsdale, for I have scarce "where to lay my head."

There are some passages in your last that brought tears in my eyes. "The heart knoweth its own sorrows, and a stranger intermeddleth not therewith." The repository of these "sorrows of the heart" is a kind of *sanctum sanctorum*: and 'tis only a chosen friend, and that, too, at particular, sacred times, who dares enter into them:

"Heaven oft tears the bosom-chords
That nature finest strung."

You will excuse this quotation for the sake of the author. Instead of entering on this subject farther, I shall transcribe you a few lines I wrote in a hermitage, belonging to a gentleman in my Nithshale neighbourhood. They are almost the only favors the muses have conferred on me in that country:

Thou whom chance may hither lead,
Be thou clad in russet weed,
Be thou deckt in silken stole :
'Grave these maxims on thy soul :

Life is but a day at most
Sprung from night in darkness lost ;
Hope not sunshine ev'ry hour ;
Fear not clouds will ever lower.
Happiness is but a name,
Make content and ease thy aim.
Ambition is a meteor-gleam ;
Fame an idle restless dream ;
Peace, the tend'rest flow'r of spring ;
Pleasures, insects on the wing,
Those that sip the dew alone,
Make the butterflies thy own ;
Those that would the bloom devour,
Crush the locusts, save the flower.
For the future be prepar'd,
Guard wherever thou canst guard :
But thy utmost duly done,
Welcome what thou canst not shun.
Follies past give thou to air,
Make their consequence thy care :
Keep the name of man in mind,
And dishonor not thy kind.
Reverence with lowly heart ;
Him whose wond'rous work thou art ;
Keep his goodness still in view,
Thy trust and thy example too.

Stranger, go ! Heaven be thy guide !
Quod the Beadsman of Nith-side.*

Since I am in the way of transcribing, the following
were the production of yesterday as I jogged through

* See Vol. II., pp. 50-52.

the wild hills of New Cumnock. I intend inserting them, or something like them, in an epistle I am going to write to the gentleman on whose friendship my Excise hopes depend, Mr Graham of Fintray, one of the worthiest and most accomplished gentlemen, not only of this country, but, I will dare to say it, of this age. The following are just the first crude thoughts “unhousel’d, unanointed, unanneal’d:”—

* * * * *

Pity the tuneful muses’ helpless train ;
 Weak, timid landmen on life’s stormy main :
 The world were blest, did bliss on them depend ;
 Ah, that “the friendly e’er should want a friend !”
 The little fate bestows they share as soon ;
 Unlike sage, proverb’d, wisdom’s hard-wrung boon.
 Let Prudence number o’er each sturdy son,
 Who life and wisdom at one race begun ;
 Who feel by reason and who give by rule ;
 Instinct’s a brute and sentiment a fool !
 Who make poor *will do* wait upon *I should* ;
 We own they’re prudent, but who owns they’re good ?

Ye wise ones, hence ! ye hurt the social eye ;
 God’s image rudely etch’d on base alloy !
 But come * * * * *

Here the muse left me. I am astonished at what you tell me of Anthony’s writing me. I never received it. Poor fellow ! you vex me much by tell me that he is unfortunate. I shall be in Ayrshire ten days from this date. I have just room for an old Roman farewell.

R. B.

No. CXIII.

TO THE SAME.

Mauchline, August 10, 1788.

MY MUCH HONORED FRIEND,

YOURS of the 24th June is before me. I found it, as well as another valued friend—my wife, waiting to welcome me to Ayrshire; I met both with the sincerest pleasure.

When I write you, Madam, I do not sit down to answer every paragraph of yours, by echoing every sentiment, like the faithful Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled, answering a speech from the best of kings! I express myself in the fulness of my heart, and may, perhaps, be guilty of neglecting some of your kind inquiries; but not from your very odd reason, that I do not read your letters. All your epistles for several months have cost me nothing, except a swelling throb of gratitude, or a deep-felt sentiment of veneration.

When Mrs. Burns, Madam, first found herself “as women wish to be who love their lords,” as I loved her nearly to distraction, we took steps for a private marriage. Her parents got the hint; and not only forbade me her company and their house, but, on my rumored West Indian voyage, got a warrant to put me in jail, till I should find security in my about-to-be paternal relation. You know my lucky reverse of fortune. On my *éclatant* return to Mauchline, I was made very welcome to visit my girl. The usual consequences began to betray her; and, as I was at that time laid up a cripple in Edinburgh, she was turned, literally turned out of doors, and I wrote to a friend to shelter her till my return, when our marriage was declared. Her happiness or misery were in my hands, and who could trifle with such a deposit?

I can easily fancy a more agreeable companion for my journey of life ; but, upon my honor, I have never seen the individual instance.

Circumstanced as I am, I could never have got a female partner for life, who could have entered into my favorite studies, relished my favorite authors, &c., without probably entailing on me at the same time expensive living, fantastic caprice, perhaps apish affectation, with all the other blessed boarding-school acquirements, which (*pardonnez moi, Madame,*) are sometimes to be found among females of the upper ranks, but almost universally pervade the misses of the would-be gentry.

I like your way in your churchyard lucubrations. Thoughts that are the spontaneous result of accidental situations, either respecting health, place, or company, have often a strength, and always an originality, that would in vain be looked for in fancied circumstances and studied paragraphs. For me, I have often thought of keeping a letter, in progression by me, to send you when the sheet was written out. Now I talk of sheets, I must tell you, my reason for writing to you on paper of this kind is my pruriency of writing to you at large. A page of post is on such a dis-social, narrow-minded scale, that I cannot abide it ; and double letters, at least in my miscellaneous reverie manner, are a monstrous tax in a close correspondence.

R. B.

No. CXIV.

TO THE SAME.

Ellisland, 16th August, 1788.

I AM in a fine disposition, my honored friend, to send you an elegiac epistle ; and want only genius to make it quite Shenstonian :—

“ Why droops my heart with fancied woes forlorn ?

Why sinks my soul beneath each wintry sky ?”

My increasing cares in this, as yet, strange country—gloomy conjectures in the dark vista of futurity—consciousness of my own inability for the struggle of the world—my broadened mark to misfortune in a wife and children ;—I could indulge these reflections, till my humor should ferment into the most acid chagrin, that would corrode the very thread of life.

To counterwork these baneful feelings, I have sat down to write to you ; as I declare upon my soul I always find that the most sovereign balm for my wounded spirit.

I was yesterday at Mr. Miller’s to dinner, for the first time. My reception was quite to my mind : from the lady of the house quite flattering. She sometimes hits on a couplet or two, *impromptu*. She repeated one or two to the admiration of all present. My suffrage as a professional man, was expected : I for once went agonizing over the belly of my conscience. Pardon me, ye, my adored household gods, independence of spirit, and integrity of soul ! In the course of conversation, “ Johnson’s Musical Museum,” a collection of Scottish songs with the music, was talked of. We got a song on the harpsicord, beginning,

“ Raving winds around her blowing.”*

The air was much admired ; the lady of the house asked me whose were the words. “ Mine, Madam—they are indeed my very best verses ;” she took not the smallest notice of them ! The old Scottish proverb says well, “ king’s caff is better than ither folks’ corn.” I was going to make a New-Testament quotation about “ casting pearls,” but that would be too virulent, for the lady is actually a woman of sense and taste.

* See Vol. II., p. 298.

After all that has been said on the other side of the question, man is by no means a happy creature. I do not speak of the selected few, favored by partial heaven whose souls are tuned to gladness amid riches and honors, and prudence and wisdom. I speak of the neglected many, whose nerves, whose sinews, whose days are sold to the minions of fortune.

If I thought you had never seen it, I would transcribe for you a stanza of an old Scottish ballad, called, "The Life and Age of Man;" beginning thus :

" 'Twas in the sixteenth hunder year
 Of God and fifty-three,
 Frae Christ was born, that bought us dear
 As writings testifie."

I had an old grand-uncle, with whom my mother lived awhile in her girlish years; the good old man, for such he was, was long blind ere he died, during which time his highest enjoyment was to sit down and cry, while my mother would sing the simple old song of "The Life and Age of Man."

It is this way of thinking; it is these melancholy truths, that make religion so precious to the poor, miserable children of men—If it is a mere phantom existing only in the heated imagination of enthusiasm,

"What truth on earth so precious as the lie!"

My idle reasonings sometimes make me a little skeptical, but the necessities of my heart always give the cold philosophizings the lie. Who looks for the heart weaned from earth: the soul affianced to her God; the correspondence fixed with heaven; the pious supplication and devout thanksgiving, constant as the vicissitudes of even and morn; who thinks to meet with these in the court, the palace, in the glair of public life? No: to find them in their precious importance and divine efficacy, we must search among the obscure recesses of disappointment, affliction, poverty, and distress.

I am sure, dear Madam, you are now more than pleased with the length of my letters. I return to Ayrshire middle of next week: and it quickens my pace to think that there will be a letter from you waiting me there. I must be here again very soon for my harvest. R. B.

No. CXV.

TO MR. BEUGO,

ENGRAVER, EDINBURGH.

Ellisland, 9th Sept., 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

THERE is not in Edinburgh above the number of the graces whose letters would have given me so much pleasure as yours of the 3d instant, which only reached me yesternight.

I am here on my farm, busy with my harvest; but for all that most pleasurable part of life called SOCIAL COMMUNICATION, I am here at the very elbow of existence. The only things that are to be found in this country, in any degree of perfection, are stupidity and canting. Prose, they only know in graces, prayers, &c., and the value of these they estimate as they do their plaiding webs—by the ell! As for the muses, they have as much an idea of a rhinoceros as of a poet. For my old capricious but good-natured hussy of a muse—

“By banks of Nith I sat and wept
When Coila I thought on,
In midst thereof I hung my harp
The willow trees upon.”

I am generally about half my time in Ayrshire with my “darling Jean,” and then I, at lucid intervals, throw my horny fist across my be-cobwebbed lyre, much

in the same manner as an old wife throws her hand across the spokes of her spinning-wheel.

I will send you the "Fortunate Shepherdess" as soon as I return to Ayrshire, for there I keep it with other precious treasure. I shall send it by a careful hand, as I would not for any thing it should be mislaid or lost. I do not wish to serve you from any benevolence, or other grave Christian virtue; 'tis purely a selfish gratification of my own feelings whenever I think of you.

If your better functions would give you leisure to write me, I should be extremely happy; that is to say if you neither keep nor look for a regular correspondence. I hate the idea of being obliged to write a letter. I sometimes write a friend twice a week, at other times once a quarter.

I am exceedingly pleased with your fancy in making the author you mention place a map of Iceland instead of his portrait before his works: 'twas a glorious idea.

Could you conveniently do me one thing?—whenever you finish any head I should like to have a proof copy of it. I might tell you a long story about your fine genius; but, as what every body knows cannot have escaped you, I shall not say one syllable about it.

R. B.

No. CXVI.

TO MISS CHALMERS,

EDINBURGH.

Ellisland, near Dumfries, Sept. 16, 1788.

WHERE are you? and how are you? and is Lady Mackenzie recovering her health? for I have had

but one solitary letter from you. I will not think you have forgot me, Madam ; and, for my part—

“ When thee, Jerusalem, I forget,
Skill part from my right hand ! ”

“ My heart is not of that rock, nor my soul careless as that sea.” I do not make my progress among mankind as a bowl does among its fellows—rolling through the crowd without bearing away any mark or impression, except where they hit in hostile collision.

I am here, driven in with my harvest-folks by bad weather ; and as you and your sister once did me the honor of interesting yourselves much *à l'égard de moi*, I sit down to beg the continuation of your goodness. I can truly say that, all the exterior of life apart, I never saw two, whose esteem flattered the nobler feelings of my soul—I will not say more, but so much, as Lady Mackenzie and Miss Chalmers. When I think of you—hearts the best, minds the noblest of human kind—unfortunate even in the shades of life—when I think I have met with you, and have lived more of real life with you in eight days than I can do with almost any body I meet with in eight years—when I think on the improbability of meeting you in this world again—I could sit down and cry like a child ! If ever you honored me with a place in your esteem, I trust I can now plead more desert. I am secure against that crushing grip of iron poverty, which, alas ! is less or more fatal to the native worth and purity of, I fear, the noblest souls ; and a late important step in my life has kindly taken me out of the way of those ungrateful iniquities, which, however overlooked in fashionable licence or varnished in fashionable phrase, are indeed but lighter and deeper shades of VILLANY.

Shortly after my last return to Ayrshire, I married “ my Jean.” This was not in consequence of the attachment of romance, perhaps ; but I had a long

and much-loved fellow-creature's happiness or misery in my determination, and I durst not trifle with so important a deposit. Nor have I any cause to repent it. If I have not got polite tattle, modish manners, and fashionable dress, I am not sickened and disgusted with the multiform curse of boarding-school affectation: and I have got the handsomest figure, the sweetest temper, the soundest constitution, and the kindest heart in the country. Mrs. Burns believes, as firmly as her creed, that I am *le plus bel esprit, et le plus honnête homme* in the universe; although she scarcely ever in her life, except the Scriptures of the Old and new Testament, and the Psalms of David in metre, spent five minutes together on either prose or verse. I must except also from this last a certain late publication of Scots poems, which she has perused very devoutly; and all the ballads in the country, as she has (O the partial lover! you will cry) the finest "wood note wild" I ever heard. I am the more particular in this lady's character, as I know she will henceforth have the honor of a share in your best wishes. She is still at Mauchline, as I am building my house; for this hovel that I shelter in, while occasionally here, is pervious to every blast that blows, and every shower that falls; and I am only preserved from being chilled to death by being suffocated with smoke. I do not find my farm that pennyworth I was taught to expect, but I believe, in time, it may be a saving bargain. You will be pleased to hear that I have laid aside idle *éclat*, and bind every day after my reapers.

To save me from that horrid situation of at any time going down, in a losing bargain of a farm, to misery, I have taken my Excise instructions, and have my commission in my pocket for any emergency of fortune. If I could set all before your view, whatever disrespect you, in common with the world, have for

this business, I know you would approve of my idea.

I will make no apology, dear Madam, for this egotistic detail; I know you and your sister will be interested in every circumstance of it. What signify the silly, idle gewgaws of wealth, or the ideal trumpery of greatness! When fellow-partakers of the same nature fear the same God, have the same benevolence of heart, the same nobleness of soul, the same detestation at every thing dishonest, and the same scorn at every thing unworthy—if they are not in the dependence of absolute beggary, in the name of common sense are they not *EQUALS*? And if the bias, the instinctive bias of their souls run the same way, why may they not be *FRIENDS*?

When I may have an opportunity of sending you this, Heaven only knows. Shenstone says, "When one is confined idle within doors by bad weather, the best antidote against *ennui* is to read the letters of, or write to, one's friends;" in that case then, if the weather continues thus, I may scrawl you half a quire.

I very lately—to wit, since harvest began—wrote a poem, not in imitation, but in the manner, of Pope's *Moral Epistles*. It is only a short essay, just to try the strength of thy Muse's pinion in that way. I will send you a copy of it, when once I have heard from you. I have likewise been laying the foundation of some pretty large poetic works: how the superstructure will come on, I leave to that great maker and marrer of projects—*TIME*. Johnson's *Collection of Scots Songs* is going on in the third volume; and, of consequence, finds me a consumpt for a great deal of idle metre. One of the most tolerable things I have done in that way is two stanzas I made to an air, a musical gentleman of my acquaintance composed for the anniversary of his wedding-day, which happens on the seventh of November. Take it as follows:—

“The day returns, my bosom burns,
The blissful day we twa did meet,” &c.*

I shall give over this letter for shame. If I should be seized with a scribbling fit, before this goes away, I shall make it another letter; and then you may allow your patience a week's respite between the two. I have not room for more than the old, kind, hearty farewell!

To make some amends *mes chères Mesdames*, for dragging you on to this second sheet; and to relieve a little the tiresomeness of my unstudied and uncorrectible prose, I shall transcribe you some of my late poetic bagatelles; though I have these eight or ten months done very little that way. One day, in a hermitage on the banks of Nith, belonging to a gentleman in my neighbourhood, who is so good as give me a key at pleasure, I wrote as follows; supposing myself the sequestered, venerable inhabitant of the lonely mansion.

LINES WRITTEN IN FRIARS'-CARSE HERMITAGE.

“Thou whom chance may hither lead,
Be thou clad in russet weed.”†

R. B.

[The domestic sketch of one great master has been completed by the hand of another; in the *Metropolitan Magazine* Sir Egerton Brydges thus relates an interview which he had with Burns on the banks of the Nith:—

“I had always been a great admirer of his genius and of many traits in his character; and I was aware that he was a person moody and somewhat difficult to deal with. I was resolved to keep in full consideration the irritability of his position in society. About a mile from his residence, on a bench,

* See Vol. II. p. 318.

† See Vol. II. pp. 50–52.

under a tree, I passed a figure, which from the engraved portraits of him I did not doubt was the Poet; but I did not venture to address him. On arriving at his humble cottage, Mrs. Burns opened the door; she was the plain sort of humble woman she has been described; she ushered me into a neat apartment, and said that she would send for Burns who was gone for a walk. In about half an hour he came, and my conjecture proved right: he was the person I had seen on the bench by the road-side. At first I was not entirely pleased with his countenance. I thought it had a sort of capricious jealousy, as if he was half inclined to treat me as an intruder. I resolved to bear it, and try if I could humor him. I let him choose his turn of conversation, but said a few words about the friend whose letter I had brought to him. It was now about four in the afternoon of an autumn day. While we were talking, Mrs. Burns, as if accustomed to entertain visitors in this way, brought in a bottle of Scotch whiskey, and set the table. I accepted this hospitality. I could not help observing the curious glance with which he watched me at the entrance of this signal of homely entertainment. He was satisfied; he filled our glasses; "Here's a health to auld Caledonia!" The fire sparkled in his eye, and mine sympathetically met his. He shook my hand with warmth, and we were friends at once. Then he drank "Erin for ever!" and the tear of delight burst from his eye. The fountain of his mind and his heart now opened at once, and flowed with abundant force almost till midnight.

"He had amazing acuteness of intellect as well as glow of sentiment. I do not deny that he said some absurd things, and many coarse ones, and that his knowledge was very irregular, and sometimes too presumptuous, and that he did not endure contradiction with sufficient patience. His pride, and perhaps his vanity, was even morbid. I carefully avoided topics in which he could not take an active part. Of literary gossip he knew nothing, and therefore I kept aloof from it; in the technical parts of literature his opinions were crude and uninformed: but whenever he spoke of a great writer whom he had read, his taste was generally sound. To a few minor writers he gave more credit than they deserved. His great beauty was his manly strength, and his energy and elevation of thought and feeling. He had always a full mind, and all flowed from a genuine spring. I never conversed with a man who appeared to be more warmly impressed with the beauties of nature; and visions of female beauty and tenderness seemed to transport him. He did not merely appear to be a poet at casual inter-

vals ; but at every moment a poetical enthusiasm seemed to beat in his veins, and he lived all his days the inward if not the outward life of a poet. I thought I perceived in Burns's cheek the symptoms of an energy which had been pushed too far ; and he had this feeling himself. Every now and then he spoke of the grave as soon about to close over him. His dark eye had at first a character of sternness ; but as he became warmed, though this did not entirely melt away, it was mingled with changes of extreme softness."—ED.]

No. CXVII.

TO MR. MORISON,

MAUCHLINE.

Ellisland, September 22, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

NECESSITY obliges me to go into my new house even before it be plastered. I will inhabit the one end until the other is finished. About three weeks more, I think, will at farthest be my time, beyond which I cannot stay in this present house. If ever you wished to deserve the blessings of him that was ready to perish ; if ever you were in a situation that a little kindness would have rescued you from many evils ; if ever you hope to find rest in future states of untried being—get these matters of mine ready. My servant will be out in the beginning of next week for the clock. My compliments to Mrs. Morison.

I am, after all my tribulation,

Dear Sir, yours,—R. B.

[Mr. Morison was a Mauchline cabinet-maker, an excellent workman, and a worthy intelligent person. The Poet, with a feeling for which no one but a worldling will blame him, ordered his furniture to be made in his native place : and Morison made it neat and serviceable. The eight-day clock, which went from Mossgiel to Ellisland, is also of Mauchline manufacture : it was sold at the death of the Poet's widow for five-and-thirty pounds, and is now in London.—ED.]

No. CXVIII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP,

OF DUNLOP.

Mauchline, 27th September, 1788.

I HAVE received twins, dear madam, more than once ; but scarcely ever with more pleasure than when I received yours of the 12th instant. To make myself understood ; I had wrote to Mr. Graham, enclosing my poem addressed to him, and the same post which favored me with yours brought me an answer from him. It was dated the very day he had received mine ; and I am quite at a loss to say whether it was most polite or kind.

Your criticisms, my honored benefactress, are truly the work of a friend. They are not the blasting depredations of a canker-toothed, caterpillar critic ; nor are they the fair statement of cold impartiality, balancing with unfeeling exactitude the *pro* and *con* of an author's merits ; they are the judicious observations of animated friendship, selecting the beauties of the piece. I have just arrived from Nithsdale, and will be here in a fortnight. I was on horseback this morning by three o'clock ; for between my wife and my farm is just forty-six-miles. As I jogged on in the dark, I was taken with a poetic fit, as follows :

“Mrs. Ferguson of Craigdarroch's lamentation for the death of her son ; an uncommonly promising youth of eighteen or nineteen years of age.

“Fate gave the word—the arrow sped,
And pierced my darling's heart.”*

You will not send me your poetic rambles, but, you see, I am no niggard of mine. I am sure your impromptus give me double pleasure ; what falls from

† See Vol. II., p. 56.

your pen can neither be unentertaining in itself, nor indifferent to me.

The one fault you found is just; but I cannot please myself in an emendation.

What a life of solicitude is the life of a parent! You interested me much in your young couple.

I would not take my folio paper for this epistle, and now I repent it. I am so jaded with my dirty long journey that I was afraid to drawl into the essence of dullness with any thing larger than a quarto, and so I must leave out another rhyme of this morning's manufacture.

I will pay the sapientipotent George most cheerfully, to hear from you ere I leave Ayrshire.

R. B.

[“ Burns entertained no great respect for what may be styled technical criticism. He loved the man who judged of poetical compositions from the heart—but looked with an evil eye upon those who decided by the cold decisions of the head. This is evinced by the following anecdote.

“ At a private breakfast, in a literary circle at Edinburgh, to which he was invited, the conversation turned on the poetical merit and pathos of Gray's *Elegy*, a poem of which he was enthusiastically fond. A clergyman present, remarkable for his love of paradox, and for his eccentric notions on every subject, distinguished himself by an injudicious and ill-timed attack on this exquisite poem, which Burns, with a generous warmth for the reputation of Gray, manfully defended. As this gentleman's remarks were rather general than specific, Burns urged him to bring forward the passages which he thought exceptionable. He made several attempts to quote the Poem, but always in a blundering, inaccurate manner. Burns bore all this for a considerable time with his usual good nature and forbearance; till, at length, goaded by the fastidious criticisms and wretched quibblings of his opponent, he roused himself, and with an eye flashing contempt and indignation, and with great vehemence of gesticulation, he thus addressed the cold critic:—‘ Sir, I now perceive a man may be an excellent judge of poetry by square and rule, and after all,—be a d—d blockhead!’ ”—CROMEK.]

No. CXIX.

TO MR. PETER HILL.

Mauchline, 1st October, 1788.

I HAVE been here in this country about three days, and all that time my chief reading has been the "Address to Lochlomond" you were so obliging as to send to me. Were I impannelled one of the author's jury, to determine his criminality respecting the sin of poesy, my verdict should be "Guilty! A poet of nature's making!" It is an excellent method for improvement, and what I believe every poet does, to place some favorite classic author in his own walks of study and composition, before him, as a model. Though your author had not mentioned the name, I could have, at half a glance, guessed his model to be Thomson. Will my brother-poet forgive me, if I venture to hint that his imitation of that immortal bard is in two or three places rather more servile than such a genius as his required:—e. g.

"To soothe the maddening passions all to peace."

ADDRESS.

"To soothe the throbbing passions into peace."

THOMSON.

I think the "Address" is in simplicity, harmony, and elegance of versification, fully equal to the "Seasons." Like Thomson, too, he has looked into nature for himself: you meet with no copied description. One particular criticism I made at first reading; in no one instance has he said too much. He never flags in his progress, but, like a true poet of nature's making, kindles in his course. His beginning is simple and modest, as if distrustful of the strength of his pinion; only, I do not altogether like—

—————"Truth,
The soul of every song that's nobly great."

Fiction is the soul of many a song that is nobly great. Perhaps I am wrong: this may be but a prose criticism. Is not the phrase, in line 7, page 6, "Great lake," too much vulgarized by every-day language for so sublime a poem?

"Great mass of waters, theme for nobler song,"

is perhaps no emendation. His enumeration of a comparison with other lakes is at once harmonious and poetic. Every reader's ideas must sweep the

"Winding margin of an hundred miles."

The perspective that follows mountains blue—the imprisoned billows beating in vain—the wooded isles—the digression on the yew-tree—"Benlomond's lofty, cloud-envelop'd head," &c. are beautiful. A thunder-storm is a subject which has been often tried, yet our poet in his grand picture has interjected a circumstance, so far as I know, entirely original:—

—————"the gloom
Deep seam'd with frequent streaks of moving fire."

In his preface to the Storm, "the glens how dark between," is noble Highland landscape! The "rain ploughing the red mould," too, is beautifully fancied. "Benlomond's lofty, pathless top," is a good expression; and the surrounding view from it is truly great: the

—————"Silver mist,
Beneath the beaming sun,"

is well described; and here he has contrived to enliven his poem with a little of that passion which bids fair, I think, to usurp the modern muses altogether. I know not how far this episode is a beauty upon the whole, but the swain's wish to carry "some faint idea of the vision bright," to entertain her "partial listening ear," is a pretty thought. But in my opinion the most beautiful passages in the whole poem are the fowls crowding, in wintry frosts, to Lochlomond's

“hospitable flood ;” their wheeling round, their lighting, mixing, diving, &c. ; and the glorious description of the sportsman. This last is equal to any thing in the “Seasons.” The idea of “the floating tribes distant seen, far glistening to the moon,” provoking his eye as he is obliged to leave them, is a noble ray of poetic genius. “The howling winds,” the “hideous roar” of “the white cascades,” are all in the same style.

I forget that while I am thus holding forth with the heedless warmth of an enthusiast, I am perhaps tiring you with nonsense. I must, however, mention that the last verse of the sixteenth page is one of the most elegant compliments I have ever seen. I must likewise notice that beautiful paragraph beginning “The gleaming lake,” &c. I dare not go into the particular beauties of the last two paragraphs, but they are admirably fine, and truly Ossianic.

I must beg your pardon for this lengthened scrawl. I had no idea of it when I began—I should like to know who the author is ; but, whoever he be, please present him with my grateful thanks for the entertainment he has afforded me.

A friend of mine desired me to commission for him two books, “Letters on the Religion essential to Man,” a book you sent me before ; and “The World Unmasked, or the Philosopher the greatest Cheat.” Send me them by the first opportunity. The Bible you sent me is truly elegant ; I only wish it had been in two volumes.

R. B.

[The poem, entitled “An Address to Lochlomond,” is said to be written by a gentleman, now one of the masters of the high-school at Edinburgh, and the same who translated the beautiful story of “The Paria,” as published the *Bee* of Dr. Anderson.—CURRIE.]

No. CXX.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE STAR."

November 8th, 1788.

SIR,

NOTWITHSTANDING the opprobrious epithets with which some of our philosophers and gloomy sectarians have branded our nature—the principle of universal selfishness, the proneness to all evil, they have given us ; still, the detestation in which inhumanity to the distressed, or insolence to the fallen, are held by all mankind, shows that they are not natives of the human heart. Even the unhappy partner of our kind, who is undone, the bitter consequence of his follies or his crimes, who but sympathizes with the miseries of this ruined profligate brother? We forget the injuries, and feel for the man.

I went, last Wednesday, to my parish church, most cordially to join in grateful acknowledgment to the AUTHOR OF ALL GOOD, for the consequent blessings of the glorious revolution. To that auspicious event we owe no less than our liberties, civil and religious ; to it we are likewise indebted for the present Royal Family, the ruling features of whose administration have ever been mildness to the subject, and tenderness of his rights.

Bred and educated in revolution principles, the principles of reason and common sense, it could not be any silly political prejudice which made my heart revolt at the harsh abusive manner in which the reverend gentleman mentioned the House of Stuart, and which, I am afraid, was too much the language of the day. We may rejoice sufficiently in our deliverance from past evils, without cruelly raking up the ashes of those, whose misfortune it was, perhaps as much their crime, to be the authors of those evils and we

may bless God for all his goodness to us as a nation, without, at the same time, cursing a few ruined, powerless exiles, who only harboured ideas, and made attempts, that most of us would have done, had we been in their situation.

“The bloody and tyrannical House of Stuart” may be said with propriety and justice, when compared with the present royal family, and the sentiments of our days; but is there no allowance to be made for the manners of the times? Were the royal contemporaries of the Stuarts more attentive to their subjects’ rights? Might not the epithets of “bloody and tyrannical” be, with at least equal justice, applied to the House of Tudor, of York, or any other of their predecessors?

The simple state of the case, Sir, seems to be this:—At that period, the science of government, the knowledge of the true relation between king and subject, was, like other sciences and other knowledge, just in its infancy, emerging from dark ages of ignorance and barbarity.

The Stuarts only contended for prerogatives which they knew their predecessors enjoyed, and which they saw their contemporaries enjoying; but these prerogatives were inimical to the happiness of a nation and the rights of subjects.

In this contest between prince and people, the consequence of that light of science which had lately dawned over Europe, the monarch of France, for example, was victorious over the struggling liberties of his people: with us, luckily, the monarch failed, and his unwarrantable pretensions fell a sacrifice to our rights and happiness. Whether it was owing to the wisdom of leading individuals, or to the justling of parties, I cannot pretend to determine; but likewise, happily for us, the kingly power was shifted into another branch of the family, who, as they owed the throne solely to

the call of a free people, could claim nothing inconsistent with the covenanted terms which placed them there.

The Stuarts have been condemned and laughed at for the folly and impracticability of their attempts in 1715 and 1745. That they failed, I bless God; but cannot join in the ridicule against them. Who does not know that the abilities or defects of leaders and commanders are often hidden until put to the touchstone of exigency; and that there is a caprice of fortune, an omnipotence in particular accidents and conjunctures of circumstances, which exalt us as heroes, or brand us as madmen, just as they are for or against us?

Man, Mr. Publisher, is a strange, weak, inconsistent being: who would believe, Sir, that in this our Augustan age of liberality and refinement, while we seem so justly sensible and jealous of our rights and liberties, and animated with such indignation against the very memory of those who would have subverted them—that a certain people under our national protection should complain, not against our monarch and a few favorite advisers, but against our **WHOLE LEGISLATIVE BODY**, for similar oppression, and almost the in very same terms, as our forefathers did of the House of Stuart! I will not, I cannot, enter into the merits of the cause; but I dare say the American Congress, in 1776, will be allowed to be as able and as enlightened as the English Convention was in 1688; and that their posterity will celebrate the centenary of their deliverance from us, as duly and sincerely as we do ours from the oppressive measures of the wrong-headed House of Stuart.

To conclude, Sir; let every man who has a tear for the many miseries incident to humanity, feel for a family illustrious as any in Europe, and unfortunate beyond historic precedent; and let every Briton (and

particularly every Scotsman), who ever looked with reverential pity on the dotage of a parent, cast a veil over the fatal mistakes of the kings of his forefathers.

R. B.

[The preacher alluded to was Mr. Kirkpatrick, a man equally stern and worthy. He got a "harmonious call" to a parish with a smaller stipend than Dunscore, and accepted it.

One of the conductors of the "London Star" at that period, and for many years afterwards, was John Mayne, a warm-hearted Dumfriesian, and author of "Logan Braes," and a lyric more touching still, "The Muffled Drum." His poem of "Glasgow" has been several times reprinted, and his "Siller Gun" is about to come out in a fourth edition with notes and embellishments. It is perhaps, one of the best of our local poems, full of character and manners—joyous humor and rustic gaiety.—ED.]

No. CXXI.

TO MRS. DUNLOP,

AT MOREHAM MAINS.

Mauchline, 13th November, 1788.

MADAM,

I HAD the very great pleasure of dining at Dunlop yesterday. Men are said to flatter women because they are weak; if it is so, poets must be weaker still; for Misses R. and K. and Miss G. M'K. with their flattering attentions, and artful compliments, absolutely turned my head. I own they did not lard me over as many a poet does his patron, but they so intoxicated me with their sly insinuations and delicate inuendos of compliment, that if it had not been for a lucky recollection, how much additional weight and lustre your good opinion and friendship must give me in that circle, I had certainly looked upon myself as a person of no small consequence. I dare not say one word how much I was charmed with the Major's friendly welcome, elegant manner, and acute remark,

lest I should be thought to balance my orientalisms of applause over-against the finest quey* in Ayrshire, which he made me a present of to help and adorn my farm stock. As it was on hallow-day, I am determined annually as that day returns, to decorate her horns with an ode of gratitude to the family of Dunlop.

So soon as I know of your arrival at Dunlop, I will take the first conveniency to dedicate a day, or perhaps two, to you and friendship, under the guarantee of the Major's hospitality. There will soon be three score and ten miles of permanent distance between us; and now that your friendship and friendly correspondence is entwisted with the heart-strings of my enjoyment of life, I must indulge myself in a happy day of the "The feast of reason and the flow of soul."

R. B.

No. CXXII.

TO MR. JAMES JOHNSON,

ENGRAVER.

Mauchline, November 15th, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAVE sent you two more songs. If you have got any tunes, or any thing to correct, please send them by return of the carrier.

I can easily see, my dear friend, that you will very probably have four volumes. Perhaps you may not find your account lucratively in this business; but you are a patriot for the music of your country; and I am certain posterity will look on themselves as highly indebted to your public spirit. Be not in a hurry; let us go on correctly and your name shall be immortal.

* Heifer.

I am preparing a flaming preface for your third volume. I see every day new musical publications advertised ; but what are they ? Gaudy, hunted butterflies of a day, and then vanish for ever ; but your work will outlive the momentary neglects of idle fashion, and defy the teeth of time.

Have you never a fair goddess that leads you a wild-goose chase of amorous devotion ? Let me know a few of her qualities, such as whether she be rather black, or fair ; plump, or thin ; short, or tall, &c. ; and choose your air, and I shall task my muse to celebrate her.

R. B.

[James Johnson, proprietor of the “Musical Museum,” was a kindly sort of person, and indulged his correspondent, the Bard, with many a flowing bowl during their studies on the mystic art of uniting music and poetry. The engraved copper-plates of the work became, after his death, the property of Mr. Blackwood ; and it is the wonder of many that a publisher so shrewd and enterprising has hitherto refrained from giving a new edition of a work so truly characteristic and national to the world : a copy of “The Scots Musical Museum” is one of the rarest of all rare things in the public market.—ED.]

No. CXXIII.

TO DR. BLACKLOCK.

Mauchline, November 15, 1788.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

As I hear nothing of your motions, but that you are, or were, out of town, I do not know where this may find you, or whether it will find you at all. I wrote you a long letter, dated from the land of matrimony, in June ; but either it had not found you, or, what I dread more, it found you or Mrs. Blacklock in too pre-

carious a state of health and spirits to take notice of an idle packet.

I have done many little things for Johnson, since I had the pleasure of seeing you; and I have finished one piece, in the way of Pope's "Moral Epistles;" but, from your silence, I have every thing to fear, so I have only sent you two melancholy things, which I tremble lest they should too well suit the tone of your present feelings.

In a fortnight I move, bag and baggage, to Nithsdale; till then, my direction is at this place; after that period, it will be at Ellisland, near Dumfries. It would extremely oblige me were it but half a line, to let me know how you are, and where you are. Can I be indifferent to the fate of a man to whom I owe so much? A man whom I not only esteem, but venerate.

My warmest good wishes and most respectful compliments to Mrs. Blacklock, and Miss Johnston, if she is with you.

I cannot conclude without telling you that I am more and more pleased with the step I took respecting "my Jean." Two things, from my happy experience, I set down as apophthegms in life. A wife's head is immaterial, compared with her heart; and—"Virtue's (for wisdom what poet pretends to it?) ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Adieu!

R. B.

[Here follow "The mother's lament for the loss of her son," and the song beginning "The lazy mist hangs from the brow of the hill." See Vol. II., p. 56; and Vol. II., p. 323.]

[It was little that Blacklock had in his power to do for a brother poet—but that little he did with a fond alacrity, and with a modest grace.—"There was, perhaps, never one among all mankind," says Heron, in his Memoir of Burns," whom you might more truly have called an angel upon earth than Dr. Blacklock: he was guileless and innocent as a child, yet endowed with manly sagacity and penetration; his heart was a perpetual

spring of overflowing benignity ; his feelings were all tremblingly alive to the sense of the sublime, the beautiful, the tender, the pious, the virtuous :—poetry was to him the dear solace of perpetual blindness ; cheerfulness, even to gaiety, was, notwithstanding that irremediable misfortune, long the predominant color of his mind. In his latter years, when the gloom might otherwise have thickened around him, hope, faith, devotion the most fervent and sublime, exalted his mind to heaven, and made him maintain his wonted cheerfulness in the expectation of a speedy dissolution.”—ED.]

No. CXXIV.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 17th December, 1788.

MY DEAR HONORED FRIEND,

YOURS, dated Edinburgh, which I have just read, makes me very unhappy. “Almost blind and wholly deaf,” are melancholy news of human nature ; but when told of a much-loved and honored friend, they carry misery in the sound. Goodness on your part, and gratitude on mine, began a tie which has gradually entwisted itself among the dearest chords of my bosom, and I tremble at the omens of your present ailing habit and shattered health. You miscalculate matters widely, when you forbid my waiting on you, lest it should hurt my worldly concerns. My small scale of farming is exceedingly more simple and easy than what you have lately seen at Moreham Mains. But, be that as it may, the heart of the man and the fancy of the poet are the two grand considerations for which I live : if miry ridges and dirty dunghills are to engross the best part of the functions of my soul immortal, I had better been a rook or a magpie at once, and then I should not have been plagued with any ideas superior to the breaking of clods and pick-

ing up grubs ; not to mention barn-door cocks or mallards, creatures with which I could almost exchange lives at any time. If you continue so deaf, I am afraid a visit will be no great pleasure to either of us ; but if I hear you are got so well again as to be able to relish conversation, look you to it, Madam, for I will make my threatenings good. I am to be at the New-Year-day fair of Ayr ; and, by all that is sacred in the world, friend, I will come and see you.

Your meeting, which you so well describe, with your old school-fellow and friend, was truly interesting. Out upon the ways of the world!—They spoil these “social offsprings of the heart.” Two veterans of the “men of the world” would have met with little more heart-workings than two old hacks worn out on the road. Apropos, is not the Scotch phrase, “Auld lang syne,” exceedingly expressive ? There is an old song and tune which has often thrilled through my soul. You know I am an enthusiast in old Scotch songs. I shall give you the verses on the other sheet, as I suppose Mr. Ker will save you the postage.

“Should auld acquaintance be forgot?”*

Light be the turf on the breast of the Heaven-inspired poet who composed this glorious fragment! There is more of the fire of native genius in it than in half a dozen of modern English Bacchanalians! Now I am on my hobby-horse, I cannot help inserting two other old stanzas, which please me mightily:—

“Go fetch to me a pint o’ wine.”†

R. B.

* See Vol. III., p. 99.

† See Vol. II., p. 322.

No. CXXV.

TO MISS DAVIES.

December, 1788.

MADAM,

I UNDERSTAND my very worthy neighbour, Mr. Ridel, has informed you that I have made you the subject of some verses. There is something so provoking in the idea of being the burthen of a ballad, that I do not think Job or Moses, though such patterns of patience and meekness, could have resisted the curiosity to know what that ballad was: so my worthy friend has done me a mischief, which I dare say he never intended; and reduced me to the unfortunate alternative of leaving your curiosity ungratified, or else disgusting you with foolish verses, the unfinished production of a random moment, and never meant to have met your ear. I have heard or read somewhere of a gentleman who had some genius, much eccentricity, and very considerable dexterity with his pencil. In the accidental group of life into which one is thrown, wherever this gentleman met with a character in a more than ordinary degree congenial to his heart, he used to steal a sketch of the face, merely he said, as a *nota bene*, to point out the agreeable recollection to his memory. What this gentleman's pencil was to him, my muse is to me; and the verses I do myself the honor to send you are a *memento* exactly of the same kind that he indulged in.

It may be more owing to the fastidiousness of my caprice than the delicacy of my taste; but I am so often tired, disgusted, and hurt with the insipidity, affectation, and pride of mankind, that when I meet with a person "after my own heart," I positively feel what an orthodox Protestant would call a species of idolatry, which acts on my fancy like inspi-

ration; and I can no more desist rhyming on the impulse, than an Eolian harp can refuse its tones to the streaming air. A distich or two would be the consequence, though the object which hit my fancy were gray-bearded age: but where my theme is youth and beauty, a young lady whose personal charms, wit, and sentiment are equally striking and unaffected—by heavens! though I had lived threescore years a married man, and threescore years before I was a married man, my imagination would hallow the very idea: and I am truly sorry that the enclosed stanzas have done such poor justice to such a subject.

R. B.

[The Laird of Glenriddel, it appears, had informed

“The charming, lovely Davies,”

that Burns was making a ballad on her beauty. The Poet took advantage of this, and sent the song enclosed in this truly characteristic letter.—ED.]

No. CXXVI.

TO MR. JOHN TENNANT.

December 22, 1788.

I YESTERDAY tried my cask of whiskey for the first time, and I assure you it does you great credit. It will bear five waters, strong; or six, ordinary toddy. The whiskey of this country is a most rascally liquor; and, by consequence, only drank by the most rascally part of the inhabitants. I am persuaded, if you once get a footing here, you might do a great deal of business, in the way of consumpt; and should you commence distiller again, this is the native barley country. I am ignorant if, in your present way of dealing, you would think it worth your

while to extend your business so far as this country side. I write you this on the account of an accident, which I must take the merit of having partly designed to. A neighbour of mine, a John Currie, miller in Carse-mill—a man who is, in a word, a “very” good man, even for a £500 bargain—he and his wife were in my house the time I broke open the cask. They keep a country public house and sell a great deal of foreign spirits, but all along thought that whiskey would have degraded this house. They were perfectly astonished at my whiskey, both for its taste and strength; and, by their desire, I write you to know if you could supply them with liquor of an equal quality, and what price. Please write me by first post, and direct to me at Ellisland, near Dumfries. If you could take a jaunt this way yourself, I have a spare spoon, knife, and fork, very much at your service. My compliments to Mrs. Tennant, and all the good folks in Glenconnel and Barguharrie.

R. B.

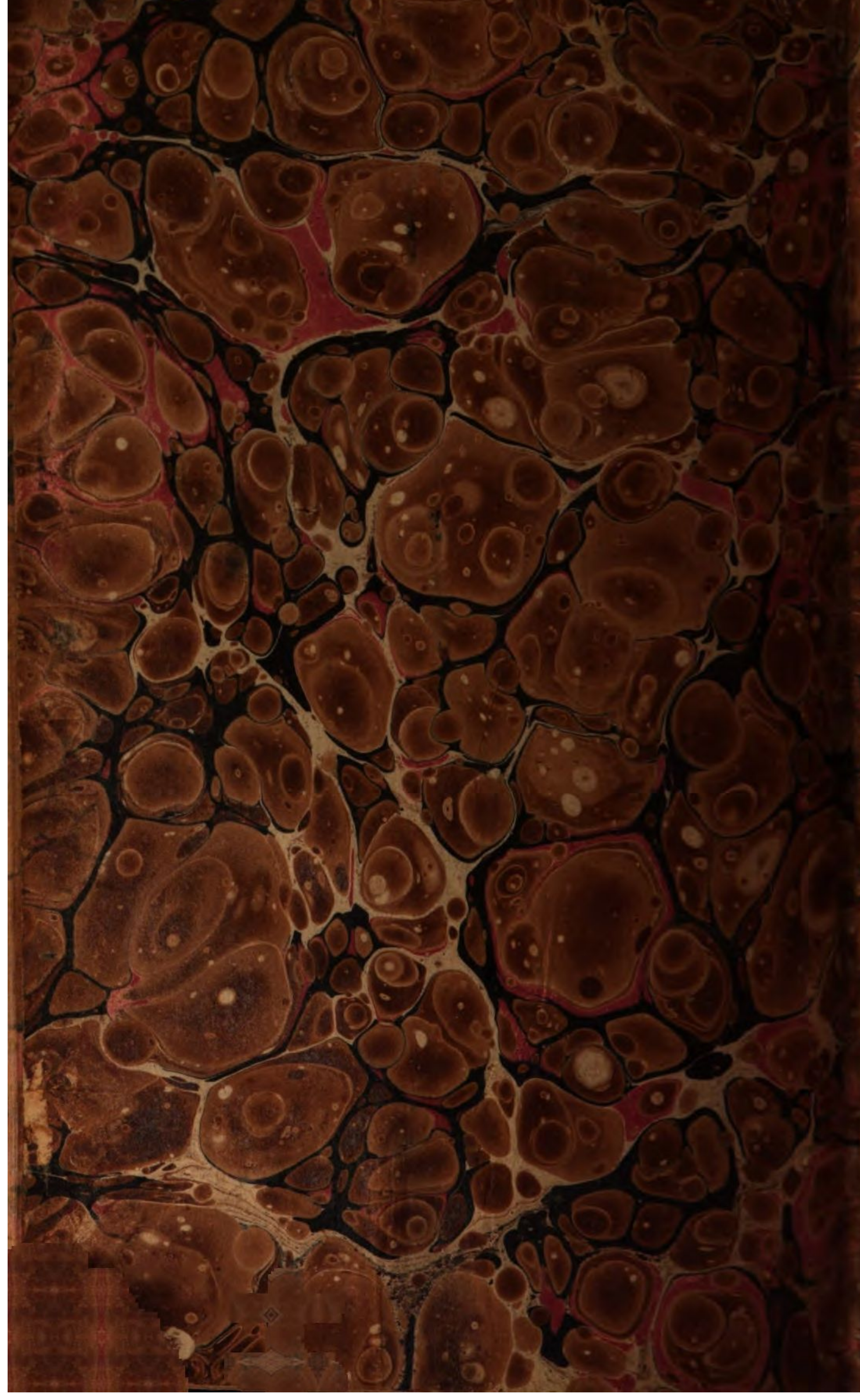
[The mill of my friend John Currie stood on a small stream, which feeds the Loch of Friars-Carse. A little island seems to float in the midst of this sheet of water, to which it is said the people in ancient times, during an English *raid*, carried their most valuable effects.—ED.]

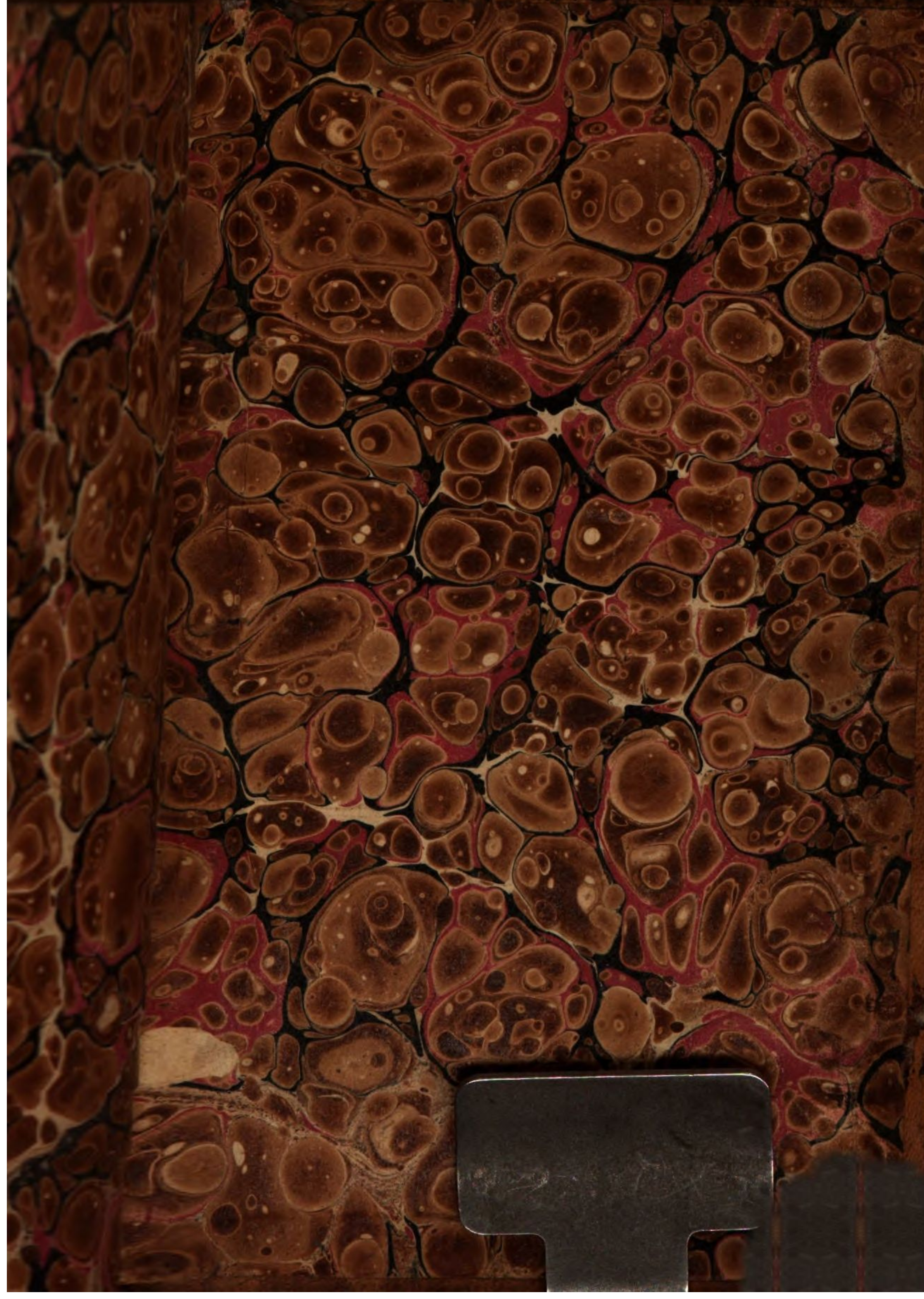
will be to extend your business as far as this country
 and I write you this on the account of an accident
 which I must take the merit of having partly designed
 to. A neighbor of mine, a John Lurie, called on
 me one day—a man who is in a word, a "very" good
 man, even for a £500 bargain—he and his wife were
 in my house the day I wrote over the case. They
 kept a country public house and sell a great deal of
 foreign spirits, but all they thought that whiskey
 would have destroyed the house. They were per-
 fectly satisfied at my whiskey, both for the taste and
 strength; and by their desire, I write you to know if
 you could supply them with liquor of an equal quality,
 and at the same price. Please write me by first post, and
 direct to me at Blandford, near Dorchester. If you
 could take a journey this way yourself, I know a spare
 room, table, and look very much at your service.
 My compliments to Mrs. Tarrant, and all the good
 folks in Gloucestershire and Bath.

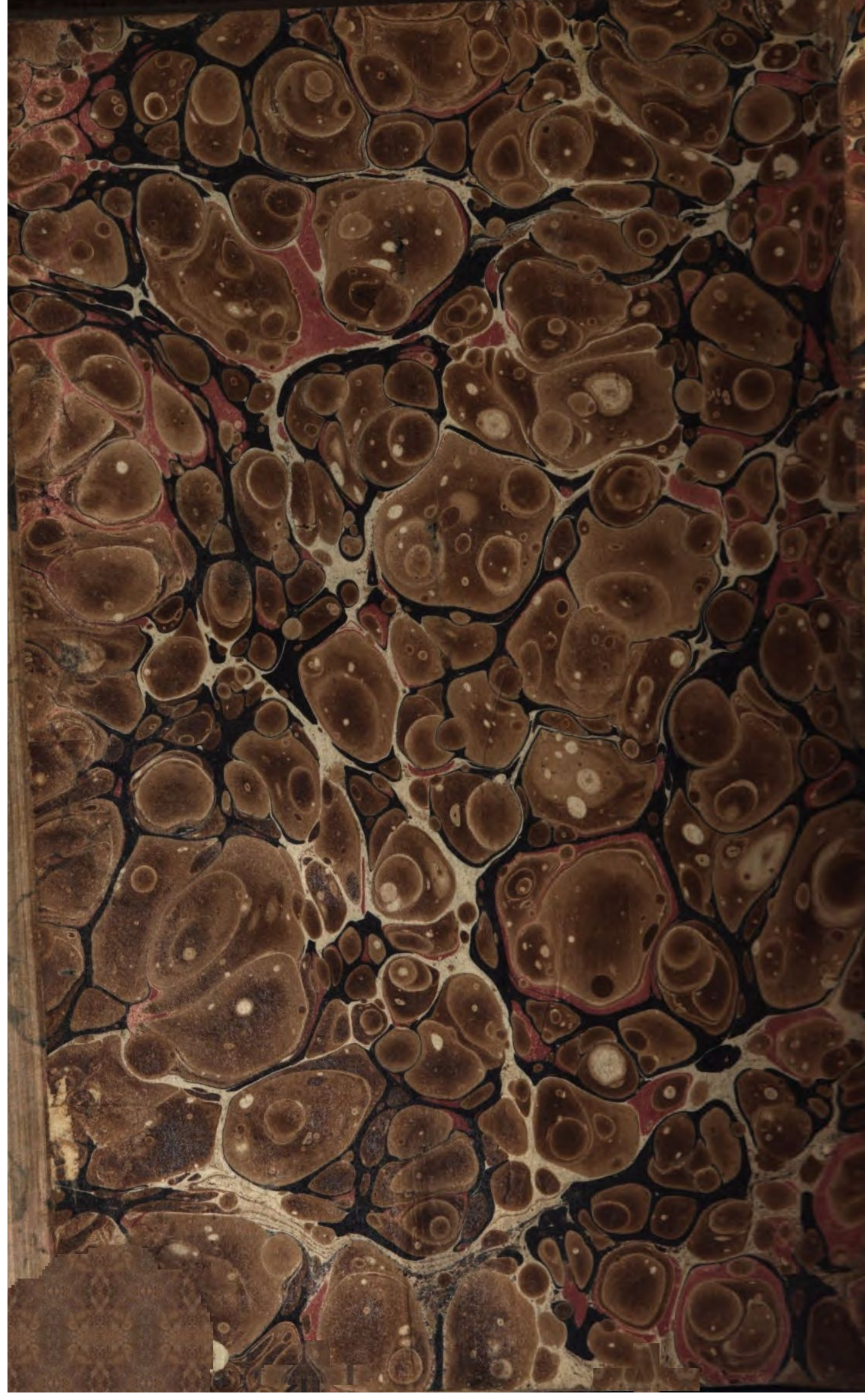
R. B.

[The rest of my friend John Lurie stood on a small stream,
 which flows into the sea of Bristol Channel. A little below where it
 flows into the river of the river of water, in which it is said the
 people in ancient times, during the English war, carried their
 most valuable spirits—R.B.]

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 which flows into the sea of Bristol Channel. A little below where it
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